

## **Youth Voices Conference**

Designing Garden-Based Programs for Children & Youth  
October 2 – 3, 2009

### **Graffiti Wall Analysis**

*A graffiti wall was posted during the conference for participants to record what they heard, their reflections, and their thoughts. The wall was divided into 4 sections; garden program impacts on youth, garden program challenges and barriers, reflections on what you see and hear at the conference today, and surprises. After the conference, all of the comments were organized into groups to reveal themes and areas of emphasis in the comments. The resulting document is organized in three parts: Impacts, Challenges, and Reflections. All of the comments are recorded in this document just as they were written on the graffiti wall.*

**Part I. Impacts**-All comments related to the impacts garden programs have on youth participants were grouped. Each group is titled and the grouped comments are listed underneath the titles. There were 6 groups that emerged from the analyses of impacts related comments.

#### 1. Garden Programs Provide Forum for Positive Community Involvement

Youth Farm Video-

The sense of community involvement the program gives to its youth.  
Jesus S. CBG GC

Taught to respect their community

Cleveland

Awesome tire recycling from neighboring mechanic. So resourceful! Hanna M.

Revolves around kids having a “real” roles in their neighborhood  
Get involved/have an effect on their community

Helps appreciate and respect their community  
“Use food as a vehicle for community change.”

How wonderful to develop community pride through community gardening.  
Makes so much sense!-J. Goldenberg

Q’s from Youth Farm and Market video.  
What kind of community change is possible when youth organize?  
How can families be involved in a youth garden experience? How does family involvement achieve the garden program goals?

Community is something kids learn about via gardening

Community building is so important. I can see how these programs have achieved this.

The fruits vegetables and flowers are fantastic, but it’s more about organizing, feeling a part of things, being cared about, learning=empowerment.

Teamwork and team building are an important element for youth gardening programs.

-Jesus S. Cleveland Botanic Garden, Green CorpsBG GC

## 2. Garden Programs Foster Personal Growth and Development

“The garden was changing and so was I” Arika P.

Learn to manage finance, stress and health Learn to help control daily lives.”- Courtney @ Cleveland.

Loved the film by LaVance Dixon-you could see his growth and learning.

Great idea to gain other knowledge and skills for the gardeners as stress management and exercise.

J. Goldenberg

Youth encouraged to be themselves and what a powerful experience that is for them. (YFMP) Hanna M.

Q for Andrea or Yolanda

How does reflection and journaling enhance your experience at Wave Hill? What would be different if you didn’t have the built in time to reflect.

Julie-Chicago

How has your family benefited from your Green Youth Farm work? Have your relationships with family members or your role in the family changed?

“Success is trying something new, even if it doesn’t work out; it’s still success for trying.” Arika P

Value

Chance to try something new-success in the trying. “I wouldn’t have tried gardening without the program.”

Garden programs encourage youth to try new things- introduction to new foods.

Deirdra Q-

What other things have you tried now that youth gardening has helped you be more open to new things?

Became more open to trying new experiences

Presenters are confident, witty poised. They are deliberate and inspirational. They are so intelligent and determined, so impressive.

Young people’s confidence that the program they were in was unique and provided them with an experience they couldn’t get anywhere else. What an awesome realization!

Develop a skill set that goes well beyond gardening. Confidence-Tolerance

Youth became more confident.

I’m impressed by the self confidence the speakers have as they seem so excited with their knowledge and skills. J. Goldenberg

Children learn to love gardening. Yolanda V.

Wave hill helped me get into gardening. I have a garden at my Jersey home. (Yolanda)

### 3. Garden Programs Build Job, Career, and Academic Skills

Courtney-Cleveland

What are some examples of “experiments” you did to see what would work best?  
What skills did this experimentation teach you?

Skills that can be used in a job of elsewhere in life. Improved leadership skills and communication skills.

Amber Q

You talked about job skills youth gardening can help youth develop- communication, stress management, interviewing, etc. How do you use these skills in other parts of your life, or how will you use them in the future?

Q for Arika

How is the youth garden program structured to provide a developmental program that builds on previous skills?

How has your teaching experience in the garden influenced your thoughts about a career decision?

Learning real world job skills in the garden.

What Job skills do you attribute to your experience in the youth garden program?  
What are entrepreneurial skills? How are you using them at this stage of your life?

Q for Arika

What are some skills first learned in youth gardening that were further developed through planning this conference.

Q for Ebony-

What did a paycheck mean to you at 12 years old? What does it mean to you now?

Jobs and job skills are the incentive to participation. Gardening the “tool”

## Garden Programs Promote Understanding of Food, Nutrition, and Healthy Eating

Given the opportunity to cook and eat healthy food.

Hanna M

“More appreciative of food, understanding how labor intensive it is.” Courtney,  
Green Corps.

Kids get healthier when they grow food themselves.

Food keeps children healthy so that they can continue helping out with the  
gardens.

Cleveland

More appreciative of food

More respect for gardeners-gardeners are needed.

Want to cook-for self-for family

Different cultures brought together through cooking cultural food.

Growing your own food=self-reliant

Eating what they produce.

Become appreciative of food. Gardens make you more self reliant and  
responsible.

Became more aware of organic food vs. Wendy's/McDonalds (fast food)

Learning about healthy and nutritional food. Change in eating habits . Trying  
new things. Jesus S CBG GC

Gardening improves kid's food choices

Gardening can open the world of cooking to kids.

Chicago

“Gardening made me realize there were more and better food options out there  
and available.”

I work in a Minneapolis public school and seeing the connection that the youth  
have with nature/healthy foods forces me to reflect on the quality of lunches at  
MPS.

## 5. Garden Programs Build Communication Skills

Communication and social skills being more open to new/unfamiliar experiences

Youth learn communication skills.

Learn to share cultural differences-Group themselves by what they are curious about!

Develop communication skills.

What communication skills the girls from Cleveland have!! Wonderful to bring them here as presenters today (not just as guests.)- J. Goldenberg

The Chicago presenters did a great job in giving health information on all their ingredients much more than you get on a TV cooking show. Use of humor was good, too! J. Goldenberg

Communications improved

Liked how people use their personal experiences to describe their emotions. - Amber C.

Photography was used to document the progression of gardening plus it added great

Excitement for the students

I'm impressed with how much the garden work helps grow new skills in the young adults- especially better communication skills with all kinds of people they normally wouldn't be comfortable talking to.

Q for Xavier

What are some ways you can integrate other interests into the youth gardening experience-like music, arts, writing?

Poetry is a great way to express summer experience.

## 6. Garden Programs Build Leadership Skills

Leadership skills, communication skills, appreciation!

Gain skills (i.e. communication and leadership) experimenting, train others, teach, memories, open to try new things, sharing knowledge and experience, more comfortable being open and talking about work.

Leadership skills have developed through their teaching and now planning these conference-great life skills!

J. Goldenberg

Lives are being changed. And I have great hope in the future of our world knowing that these young adults are empowered to lead.-Steph J

**Part II. Challenges**-All of the graffiti wall comments related to challenges and barriers of garden programs are grouped, titled and listed below.

Gardening space

In a school setting, how do you maintain the support-enough help to keep the gardens up, etc.

Small gardens are a problem to New York Cities.  
Yolanda Vega

Can we find good soil in the city?

Make opportunities appealing to youth

Getting kids hooked: Jobs/adult mentors what does it take?

Can we teach people to eat a plant based diet?

The huge age difference might seem to be a barrier or difficulty. The huge amount of people allowed to participate.  
Courtney McRae

Q for Xavier-

What are some of the things about gardening that could turn youth off.  
(weeding, stereotypes about male vs female work) What can adults do to get around these barriers?

Jobs!!! Hard work!!! (weeding)

Money

Will kids do gardening without being paid?

Time

Getting the time to go outside in a public school.

Didn't think that Obamas wife.-Amber C.

**Part III. Reflections-**One of the goals of the Youth Voices Conference was the opportunity for youth, leaders, and conference participants alike to reflect on their own work as they hear about the work of others. The reflections that were recorded as post-it comments on the graffiti wall are grouped and listed below.

### New Programming Ideas

Work-study program for high school grow and sell produce 16-20 hrs/wk.

New Idea: Lasagna beds

U pick (wed and sat) 8am-1pm Use coupons from WIC \$3/bag cookbook

Five presentations (food demo) at Health Dept Women Infant and Child WIC  
Some have a credited class. Invite to farm site to pick own veg. COOL!

Bee hives @ garden in Cleveland!

Vacant lot to garden-huge transformation-seemingly useless land can be given a purpose.

Wave Hill NY

Leaders have CPR/First Aide training.

Chicago

Youth do cooking demonstrations-teaching community how to eat healthier and cook. - Sell them veggies they grow! Wow!

Being able to have a viable program with youth involvement needs some anchors-a city garden-government programs like WIC.

New York plays the same ice breaker game we do in Cleveland Green Corps

Cleveland Green Corps

We should have a college program like the wave hill organization.

Cooperative between youth program and community/ gov.prog. Go to health department and do food demonstrations to wic program participants. Provide coupons to “you pick”

More food programs and accessible food through programs such as wic.

-Jesus S. CBG GC

Chicago

“You Pick” People come to garden and harvest and pay for produce!

Great idea!

Value added products.

I think that it is amazing how former child gardeners are now working for the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. This is something the green corps would like to incorporate into our program.

-Jesus S CBG

Make use of different media:

Songs/music

Poetry

Writing-newsletter

Youth teaching youth

Individual bed for personal development something they want to experiment with-something their family wants to bring home.

#### Program Promotion

Perhaps we can send information on youth gardening opportunities in the packets given to teachers at fieldtrips to the Arb.

Create on-line clearing house for ideas-successes-failures-continue efforts learn from and communicate with each other. Youth continue to talk with each other-blog?

Promoting garden work programs at schools

#### Sense of belonging

The fruits vegetables and flowers are fantastic, but it's more about organizing, feeling a part of things, being cared about, learning=empowerment.

Liked how they categorize people to where they like

-Amber C.

Full circle learning

All the nationalities working together is amazing.-Courtney McRae

Good for young kids- learn rather than day care or park-great for urban city kids

Transition from student to teacher-used to be in the kids shoes.

Loved the film by LaVance Dixon-you could see his growth and learning.

Family influence on what gets planted or plants chosen for the garden.

Involvement in planning process, implementation and evaluation

Evolving Master Gardeners could be a link for youth community gardens.  
Love the tie in with the wic program and the Chicago Bot. Garden project.

Social grouping by curiosity. Roots in the neighborhood. Connecting to each other.

The conception that some jobs are meant for females and no males.

Engaging youth in the process of creating programs means stopping, taking time and not planning on the fly. –Steph J

Personal finance clinic with educate on stress management and exercise.

True job skills learned. Hands on learning practiced.

I learned everyone sells the produce at some type of market.  
-Courtney McRae

Food demos in class are great.

Have fun after a hard day. (Yolanda)

Never realized there are so many gardens existing in the area I am in.  
-Andrew Ault

Unanswered questions

Who made the recipe? To Chicago

Does anyone else know what TCS is?

How important is it to have gear that visually identifies you with your program? I see that several youth here today have t-shirts or other gear.

How do kids group themselves differently outdoors?

### Statements

I became frustrated when I hear adults patronizing youth (oh they're so cute?) Young people can be powerful agents of change if we move from "teaching" to "coaching". Today is evidence of some incredibly motivated young people, and also of their committed adult mentors.

Green houses are important! (Yolanda Vega)

Youth can be sometimes underrepresented/misrepresented/misunderstood. Working w/ youth, we know so many great experiences and stories; these are always better in their own words.

Adult leaders certainly influence a program setting the scene for learning and discovery. How have the youth been able to take the adult's work to the next level?

Steph J

Gardening programs need to deliver more than plant info-they also need to deliver fun, friendships, mentoring, a sense of place, a job (\$), college credit, and resume building, stepped opportunities, leadership opportunities, skill building, creative outlet and connection to nature, the chance to expand their world, sense of direction and confidence.

Steph J.

Australia is cool.

The programs that the speakers are involved with seem to have been around for many years.

Let's hope this is the start of something big!

Cleveland Girls You Rock! Great start-the tasting!

### Surprises?

I was surprised that some youth are paid to work on youth farms/gardens.

Cleveland used: Lasagna style garden in raised beds-never heard of that!

Like the hands-on experience. –Amber C

Surprised by how much enthusiasm the young people develop for gardening, vegetables, flowers and the whole process of harvesting, cooking, and selling. “Nature seems to bring out their best natures.”

Recycling tires as flowerpots! Green rough! Amazed you are using and learning such great concepts.

I was a little surprised that some young men have the impression that gardening is for girls. That will help me think about how to frame our work to appeal to all.

Food waste can be recycled to help grow more food.

66 summers!

“People are learning thing they can’t even identify!”  
-from the youth farm video. That is so true! Do we need to identify something to be learning? Arika

Thank goodness for humor and poems.

The commitment of the youth to continue summer after summer.

The youth adults are doing a great job working on their speaking and presentation skills.

Young People addicted to sorrel? Yes!