



# 4 Curriculum

**CHAPTER LEAD:**

Gigia Kolouch, *Slow Food Denver, CO*

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

Linda Colwell, *Slow Food Portland, OR*  
Lynn Hyndman, *Slow Food Chicago, IL*  
Andrew Nowak, *Slow Food Denver, CO*



Slow Food USA

## Introduction

**N**ow that you have a garden established, it's important to connect it to the students. In schools across the country, teachers are under considerable pressure to provide educational opportunities that help students achieve state academic standards. In some enlightened cases, schools and teachers may use the garden as a tool for these lessons, teaching things like biology, botany, writing, and math, using the garden to create a real-world application. However, it often falls to volunteers in after-school programs to use the garden to provide educational opportunities. Whether for teachers or for volunteers, however, there is a wealth of excellent information about developing curricula that reinforce these kinds of lessons.

The goal of this Curriculum chapter is to provide a different kind of approach to student engagement, one that is rooted in the Slow Food values of Good, Clean, and Fair food for all. This chapter provides ideas and examples of curricula that engage children around the food itself, rather than embedding garden lessons in traditional classroom curriculum. We certainly believe that using the garden as a laboratory for courses such as science and social studies is a worthy enterprise, and we want to encourage its continuation. However, as Slow Food, we also want to encourage teachers and volunteers to use their garden to teach children about:



# 1

**Where food comes from**

# 2

**What real food tastes like**

# 3

**How to grow and harvest fresh produce in an environmentally friendly way**

# 4

**How food connects to culture and community**

Use the garden to teach about where food comes from and how it connects us to culture and community

This chapter does not provide a custom Slow Food curriculum to be used by Slow Food chapters. Instead, for the purposes of this manual, we seek to share some examples of existing curricula that support the above goal and the Good, Clean, and Fair values. Slow Food members have developed some of these curriculum examples, while other examples come from other external resources. In addition, we have provided examples from Slow Food Denver of professional development workshops that are designed to train volunteers and teachers in how to teach from a school garden. We feel that professional development is key to the successful implementation of school gardens in the classroom. These workshops represent a different kind of curriculum that we've worked to develop for use in the garden.

# Good, Clean, and Fair in a Garden Curriculum

Bringing Slow Food into a school garden means developing lessons for students that provide a hands-on experience with food that is fun as well as educational and extends from the growing process to harvest to cooking and enjoying the results.

Therefore, a “Slow Food” school garden curriculum should include the following elements as it seeks to capture the hearts and imaginations of the students:

# 1

**Activities and instruction regarding growing food, including a discussion of the cultural and regional connections behind certain foods**

# 2

**Activities that center around cooking and eating**

# 3

**Activities that promote the enthusiastic enjoyment of Good, Clean, and Fair food for all**

A Slow Food school garden will link the pleasure of food with a commitment to community and the environment. The curriculum is the place where the Slow Food mission is expressed in gardening and cooking activities. Our holistic approach allows the student to understand the network of relationships between humans and the natural environment from a personal point of view.

This curriculum chapter is organized into two sections. First, we will show how Good, Clean, and Fair should be present in a Slow Food curriculum and provide an explanation of these components. In this section, we will show several examples of recommended curricula by Slow Food members and others that meet some or all of the Good, Clean, and Fair components. We will then talk briefly about how to conduct professional development workshops with teachers and garden leaders in order to bring Good, Clean, and Fair lessons into the garden classes.



“(Food) education will embrace slowness, pleasure, diversity and community. Put into practice, this means that activities that engage people’s senses, mind and passion in discovering ‘real’ food — from taste test games, to planting school gardens or organizing cooking lessons — are one of the strongest opportunities we have to improve our food systems. Without creating the desire for ‘something else’, the industrial food system will always have a captive audience.”

— SLOW FOOD INTERNATIONAL

# Good, Clean, and Fair in a Slow Food Curriculum

As we think about a “Good, Clean, and Fair” curriculum, it’s useful to define those terms and think about what they mean in a curriculum. Table 1 shows how “Good, Clean, and Fair” can fit into a garden lesson plan.

**TABLE 1: GOOD, CLEAN, AND FAIR: WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN THE CURRICULUM?**

|                     | <b>GOOD</b><br>Enjoying the pleasures of healthy and delicious food   | <b>CLEAN</b><br>Gardening for sustainability   | <b>FAIR</b><br>Producing food with respect for economic and social justice   |
|---------------------|---|--|--|
| <b>BIG IDEAS</b>    | Education about healthy food choices incorporates knowledge of how the quality of food is affected by its freshness, cultural factors, preparation, cooking, and consumption. | Food must be produced sustainably to help ensure the ecological well being of our natural systems and the health of our diverse human communities. | The co-producer. We as consumers have power to join hands with producers to regain control over how food is produced, distributed and sold in our communities. |
| <b>KEY CONCEPTS</b> | Our culture shapes our food choices and behaviors.  | How we grow our food affects the Earth, our community, and our personal lives.   | Food should be accessible and affordable to all, while respecting the dignity of labor from field to fork.   |



Table 2 on the following page shows how the examples of curricula provided in this chapter “rate” in terms of their connection to each of these important concepts. In coming years, we hope to develop a “Slow Food-specific” curriculum that does a robust job of tying together all of the Good, Clean, and Fair values and builds on the excellent work represented in the examples that follow.

**TABLE 2: HOW EXISTING CURRICULUM RATES ACCORDING TO METRICS OF PROMOTING GOOD, CLEAN, AND FAIR**

| CURRICULUM NAME   | GOOD    |                |                 |                |               |                                 | CLEAN         |                 |                    |                  |                |                 | FAIR                     |                  |               |                   |                      |                    |              |             |
|---|---------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------|
|   | Sensory | Kitchen Skills | Cooking Classes | Food & Culture | Farm to Table | Celebrations / Community Events | Healthy Soils | Heirloom Plants | Insect Life Cycles | Plants & Culture | Wise Water Use | Crop Management | Local Growing Conditions | Farmers' Markets | Food Pantries | Local Food System | National Food System | Global Food System | Human Rights | Food Policy |
| *Eat Think Grow<br>Linda Colwell<br><a href="http://eatthinkgrow.org/">http://eatthinkgrow.org/</a>   | ■       | ■              | ■               | ■              | ■             | ■                               | ■             | ■               | ■                  | ■                | ■              | ■               | ■                        | ■                | ■             | ■                 | ■                    |                    |              | ■           |
| *Seed-to-Table Activity Guide,<br>Gigia Kolouch<br><a href="http://www.sfdseedtotable.org/stt-documents/">http://www.sfdseedtotable.org/stt-documents/</a>  | ■       | ■              | ■               | ■              |               |                                 | ■             |                 |                    | ■                |                |                 | ■                        |                  | ■             |                   |                      |                    |              | ■           |
| *Plant, Harvest, Celebrate<br>Lynn Hyndman  | ■       | ■              |                 | ■              |               | ■                               | ■             |                 |                    | ■                | ■              |                 | ■                        |                  |               |                   |                      |                    |              |             |
| *Slow Food International<br><a href="http://www.slowfood.com/education/">http://www.slowfood.com/education/</a>   | ■       |                |                 | ■              | ■             | ■                               | ■             | ■               |                    | ■                |                | ■               |                          |                  |               | ■                 | ■                    | ■                  | ■            | ■           |
| Food is Elementary<br><a href="http://www.foodstudies.org/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=29&amp;Itemid=32">http://www.foodstudies.org/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=29&amp;Itemid=32</a> |         | ■              | ■               | ■              |               |                                 |               |                 |                    |                  |                |                 |                          |                  |               |                   |                      |                    |              |             |
| The Growing Classroom<br>Life Lab <a href="http://www.lifelab.org/store/curriculum">http://www.lifelab.org/store/curriculum</a>   |         |                |                 |                | ■             | ■                               | ■             |                 | ■                  |                  | ■              | ■               | ■                        |                  |               |                   |                      |                    |              |             |
| Cooking with Kids<br><a href="http://cookingwithkids.net/shop/">http://cookingwithkids.net/shop/</a>  | ■       | ■              | ■               | ■              | ■             |                                 |               |                 |                    | ■                |                |                 |                          |                  |               |                   |                      |                    |              |             |

**NOTE:** Curriculum with \* indicates those written by Slow Food members.

## CURRICULUM EXAMPLE

**eat. think. grow.**Lessons for the School Garden **LINDA COLWELL, PORTLAND, OR**

**E**at. think. grow. is a comprehensive kindergarten-to-fifth-grade, seasonally based garden education curriculum designed to support teachers and school garden volunteers. The curriculum integrates garden-based education into the learning day through in-depth activities that address core curriculum standards. The lessons follow a blended seasonal-school-year calendar that combines age-appropriate and seasonal activities.

At the beginning of the year, kindergartners are introduced to the garden as a place of learning, like the library or gymnasium. They plant large seeds, such as garlic, that will overwinter and produce a plant in the spring. They learn about the spatial relations inherent in a garden, such as *under*, *above*, and *on* the ground, and what is living and non-living in the garden.

First-grade lessons introduce natural and man-made environments and reveal the diversity of living things in the soil, plants, and air around the garden. Winter lessons introduce soil and its various properties, and seeds and their needs. Spring lessons shift to developing an understanding of insects and their role in the garden.

Second graders learn about harvesting ripe and ready-to-eat plants for food and how that is different from harvesting seeds for saving. Spring is full of lessons that focus on green, leafy plants growing in the garden and includes a lesson that reveals what grows in the neighborhood, tying students to a broader sense of place.

Third grade brings a focus on diversity and life cycles in the garden and preparation for third grade science testing. Students develop and test hypotheses in the garden, get to know their local farmer, and plant potatoes.

Fourth graders learn about the Ozette potato and spend the winter mapping and designing their garden plans. The spring lessons culminate with in-depth studies of farmers and farmers' markets.

In fifth grade, students learn about corn and spend the winter studying school food systems, marketing and advertising local foods in the cafeteria. In springtime, students learn about compost and soil improvement.



## CURRICULUM EXAMPLE

# Slow Food Denver Seed to Table Activity Guide



GIGIA KOLOUCH AND ANDREW NOWAK, DENVER, CO

The Seed to Table Activity Guide is designed to help facilitate transformational change to the school food and education systems while furthering the goals of Slow Food Denver. Through the construction of school gardens, the integration of multidisciplinary garden-based learning, and food and taste education programs, the Seed to Table program strives to foster dramatic and lasting change in the food system by creating a generation of citizens who become enthusiastic supporters of Good, Clean, and Fair food.

This guide is the result of 11 years of program development, trial and error, lessons learned, and collaboration among Slow Food Denver, Denver Public Schools, Denver Environmental Health, the Denver Fire Department, and countless experts, consultants, teachers, chefs, and volunteers. While not all-inclusive, each section guides

teachers, administrators, and program developers through specific projects, processes, and lessons representing best practices, while supplying valuable resources, classroom-tested lessons, and recipes.

The lessons in this guide are designed to be used in tandem with the Seed to Table Project Manual, which describes the planning, permitting, garden construction, and processes used to build Taste Education, Garden to Cafeteria, Youth Farmers' Markets, and Chef-Driven classroom activities. While written for elementary ages, these lessons and processes can be, and have been, adapted for a variety of age groups, environments, and settings. Though covering a variety of processes in garden and taste education, these lessons can be used independently, adapted to classroom and other outdoor settings, and are constructed to allow varying instructional time, differentiated learning, and varying complexity.

## Overarching Goals and Principles of the Seed to Table School Food Program

- Deepen learners' understanding of and appreciation for the foods they eat.
- Increase the consumption of, and willingness to try, fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Develop an understanding of the food system including growing, harvesting, preparing, and, in some cases, marketing fresh foods.
- Teach learners about the relationships between their diet, bodies, and health.
- Encourage experiential scientific inquiry into life, earth, and social sciences.
- Provide a safe environment where students are free to develop and refine their taste preferences, learn basic food preparation techniques, and explore the relationships between the food system and their community.
- Embrace multidisciplinary, hands-on learning that engages learners and their community.



**The Seed to Table School Garden Activity Guide is organized by themes covering the following subjects:**

**1**

**Plant Cultivation:**

Introduces learners to growing food from seed to harvest.

**2**

**Sensory Education:**

Promotes learners' appreciation of food and flavors, and the exploration of individual taste preferences.

**3**

**Using Kitchen Tools:**

Provides lessons on basic food preparation, processing, and common kitchen tools.

**4**

**Plant Botany:**

Explores the parts of a plant, their functions, and life cycles.

**5**

**Food and Culture:**

Explores the cultures and cuisines of the world through cooking, geography, games, and books.

**6**

**Farm to Table:**

Introduces students to food systems, markets, and supply chains to foster the development of informed consumers.

**7**

**Appendices:**

Provide supplemental information about lesson planning, choosing activities for your program, cooking with children, maintaining a garden, and recommended resources.



Photos courtesy Linda Colwell

## CURRICULUM EXAMPLE

# Plant, Harvest, Celebrate!



LYNN HYNDMAN, CHICAGO, IL

This set of three basic gardening lessons is designed for elementary students in grades kindergarten through fifth. It includes a spring planting lesson, a spring harvest and tasting lesson, and a fall harvest and tasting lesson. Each lesson has a number of activities appropriate for various grade levels, grouped in this manner: Grades K-1, 2-3, and 4-5. The exception is the fall harvest and tasting, where there are

separate lessons for kindergartners and first graders.

These lessons were designed for use in edible school gardens, where plants are grown in raised beds with tools at hand in a shed, and seating at picnic tables, where students come to enjoy the tastings. As long as there are basic garden tools available and some good soil in which to plant, the activities in most lessons can be adapted for most situations.

## Overview of each lesson:

**Spring Planting:** The reasons for nourishing the soil food web are the heart of the lesson as the older students prepare the raised beds for planting. Younger students learn about the role of the garden compost bin, what materials can be recycled in the bin, and what critters do the work of recycling the garden waste. A variety of cool-season seedlings—kale, chard, arugula, spinach, and salad greens—is planted by the younger children.

**Spring Harvest & Tasting:** Students learn how to harvest greens and about the important role plant food and, in particular, greens play in their daily diet. They then come together to assemble and enjoy a salad fresh from the garden.

**Fall Harvest & Tasting:** Each class participates in the fall harvest and celebration. The celebration emphasizes the many pleasures of fresh garden food, honors the people who help put food on our table each day, and calls attention to the diversity of crops in the garden, along with the diverse culinary traditions within the community.



**Here is an example of a lesson plan from Plant, Harvest, Celebrate!**

## DELVING DEEP INSIDE THE GARDEN'S SOIL FOOD WEB

BY LYNN HYNDMAN

The compost bin in our edible school garden is prominently situated right next to our garden gate. In the spring it is our first stop when I welcome the fourth and fifth graders to the garden. The older students have the task of preparing the raised beds for planting and are eager to get to work. We talk briefly about how we will use the compost to feed the soil before gathering around a raised bed. My first job is to awaken the students' imaginations to what is happening underground. Imagine, I say, a vast network of activity with diverse populations at work—earthworms, microbes, nematodes, millipedes, centipedes, etc. Their jobs vary and include moving water through the soil, warding off diseases, recycling plant particles, becoming food for other critters, and, most importantly, providing nutrients for plants and other organisms. The question is: why should we keep these critters happy? Is there any way their survival is linked to ours? With a few more leading questions, the impact of healthy soil on plants and on our own health is brought home. Our attention is now brought to the task at hand, supporting this underground network that, like us, requires air, water, and food to survive. We set to work, lightly cultivating the soil so as not to cause much disturbance to the system. Loosening the soil provides more pathways for the air and water to reach the organisms. Next, we gently work in the compost after pausing to discuss its important role. When we feed the soil, just what are we feeding? Well, a handful of compost is home to billions of tiny creatures. Feeding just a small amount of compost to the soil in the early spring helps jump-start activity as the beds warm slowly in the sun.

A few more steps, and our work is done. We level the soil bed so that the rainwater will be evenly distributed and finish things off by mulching. Students know that the mulch will help retain the moisture in the soil in addition to keeping the competition from the weeds down. Wrapping things up, we take time to reflect on how our survival depends on a healthy soil food web. It's clear from working the soil that the children gained a deeper understanding of the miraculous system nature has in place for feeding us. Judging from a fifth grader's comments, it's good for the body and soul, too. "I like that we all have something to talk about in coming to the garden and that we get to work together. I like getting away from the stress."



## Professional Development

Since the majority of the Slow Food programming in school gardens is delivered by volunteers and teachers who may not be familiar with all the uniqueness of a garden lesson based on Slow Food philosophies, it will be important to conduct workshops that train the garden educators on how to deliver the curriculum. Slow Food Denver holds a monthly workshop that is open to all volunteers and teachers who bring students into the gardens. The theme of the workshops varies each month, but try to address seasonally appropriate lessons that can be applied immediately in the schools. For example, in February the workshop may show how to plant seeds and take care of seedlings in the classrooms. In the August workshop, a lesson on how to cook with students using garden produce is presented to the volunteers.

Workshops try to address seasonally appropriate lessons that can be applied immediately in the schools.

## WORKSHOP PARTNERS

A Slow Food chapter may not have all of the expertise necessary to run professional development workshops. In that case, a good strategy is to develop relationships with local organizations that may have the same or similar mission and invite them to lead a workshop. Use the following list to brainstorm possible partnerships. In exchange, you can advertise their events to your members and school gardens.



**Environmental education organizations**  
**Permaculture groups**  
**Urban agriculture groups**  
**Local farms**  
**Cooking schools**  
**Gardening associations**  
**Community garden associations**  
**Local university or college teachers**  
**USDA Agriculture in the Classroom Program**  
**Examples of workshops**

## TYPES OF WORKSHOPS

**Introduction to Gardening with Kids:** Example Provided

**Introduction to Cooking with Kids:** Example Provided

**Connecting food with culture and heritage** and instilling pride in food traditions

**Growing and Cooking with Herbs**, including how to start a school herb garden, how to harvest, and how to use fresh herbs with young learners

**Edible Perennials and Permaculture** in the School Garden

**NOTE:** as you might imagine, these kinds of workshops can extend well beyond educating teachers and volunteers on implementing various curricula. They are also great opportunities to provide lessons learned from other sections of this manual, including things like negotiating school district policies regarding school gardens (approved garden materials, health and safety codes, volunteer background checks, etc.) and fundraising for gardens: how to fill out a grant application, where to look for funding, how to tell your story.

## THREE EXAMPLES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

Gigia Kolouch of Slow Food Denver and Linda Colwell of Portland, OR have developed a series of workshops that help train volunteers and teachers on how to deliver garden and cooking lessons with students. These workshop guides can be used by any Slow Food chapter to help design a workshop that is tailored to the specific needs of a garden program. As part of this manual, we have included two of the workshop guides as appendices to this chapter.



# 1

In the workshop called **Gardening with Young Learners**, the participants will learn about the Slow Food philosophy concerning garden education and how gardening in Colorado is unique compared with other locations. The guide then provides safety tips, weed identification guidance, and a list of garden supplies to outfit your school garden. For Colorado schools, the guide features several Cultivation charts and a Garden Calendar to help plan the planting and harvesting dates of produce items that will grow in Colorado. The guide then ends with a list of resources for seeds and books that will support the garden classes.

# 2

In the second workshop guide called **Cooking with Young Learners**, class participants again are taught the Slow Food philosophies on cooking with students and how the students should be the drivers in how the recipe is made in class. The guide includes Safety Tips when cooking with students and a list of required cooking supplies for an effective school teaching kitchen.

# 3

**eat. think. grow.** uses professional development training models and continuing education credits to train classroom teachers and community partners. eat. think. grow. tailors 1, 3, and 5 day workshops to give teachers the tools, framework, and confidence to implement and align school gardens and food literacy with core curriculum and into the school learning environment. Special focus areas include wellness, and place- and community-based education.

Both workshop guides contain a Tasting Worksheet so that students of all ages can record their experiences each time they make and sample a new recipe. The Tasting Worksheet can be used with students in kindergarten because the rating system is a series of faces representing five steps from Yuk! to Yum! Older students can use the same worksheet but instead replace the faces for actual words that describe their taste experience.