

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODELS PROMISING PRACTICE

VISION

Successful school garden professional development effectively supports school communities in using learning gardens as an instructional tool. It equips individuals, schools and organizations with the knowledge, language and tools to integrate the garden into the learning culture of the school or site.

OVERVIEW

Professional Development takes many forms, in a variety of settings and to a wide range of educators. For this activity, we brainstormed the many forms of professional development organizations at the 2016 SGSO Institute use in various methods. Below are six categories of professional development that are commonly used by school garden organizations, including a description, examples from organizations using the model, pros and cons and relative cost. Professional Development models vary broadly and are often determined by the goals of the SGSO involved. SGSOs should evaluate which type(s) of professional development model works best with their organization based on cost, organization goals, and audience.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODELS AND EXAMPLES

MODELS

[Site-Specific Professional Development](#)

[Conferences and Summits](#)

[Webinars](#)

[Video and Other Online Training Tools](#)

[Workshops](#)

[Garden Education Professional Learning Communities](#)

Since 2016, School Garden Support Organizations (SGSOs) have been gathering annually for a Leadership Institute hosted by Life Lab in Santa Cruz, CA. The following is a collectively created, curated set of notes from these gatherings, updated annually by Institute participants and facilitators. Find more resources for SGSOs, including Webinars, a digital copy of this Best Practice Document, and information on upcoming Leadership Institutes, at: www.sgsonetwork.org. Find resources shared by Leadership Institute participants in this [Leading Garden-Based PD Folder](#)

[School Garden Education Intensives](#)

MODEL: Site-Specific Professional Development

Site-specific Professional Development is done as part of a larger partnership forged between a school and a School Garden Support Organization (SGSO.) These relationships are intensive and comprehensive; offering schools support in developing their learning garden and using it effectively over a long period of time (often 1-3 years.) Funding may come from the school or from the organization, and often the relationship is outlined in a contract (see sample contracts below.) Over the span of the contract, organizations may provide multiple trainings on curriculum and instruction, gardening skills and outdoor group management. Additional training could be offered on engaging the greater school community, grant writing, cooking and nutrition, and more. The details and intensity of the support vary based on resource availability and the goals of the school.

Teacher training in this model can be offered as workshops for teachers and staff only, or via model teaching or co-teaching with teachers and students.

Examples and Resources for Site-Specific Teacher Training:

Examples of Contracts and Memoranda of Understanding Between SGSOs and Schools:

- ★ [Denver Urban Gardens \(DUG\) MOU](#)
- ★ [NOYO Food Forest MOU](#)
- ★ [New Haven SYH Contract](#)

Examples of Programs Using Co-Teaching and/or Model Teaching as Part of Teacher Training:

- ★ [City Blossoms](#)
- ★ [CT-SGRC relationship model](#)

Pros and Cons of Site-Specific Teacher Training:

PROS	CONS
School needs are met because of the tailored approach	Resource intensive, including experienced professionals
Overall outcomes are positive because of intensive support	Big commitment for school for multiple on-site training sessions and the planning involved
Strong relationships develop between school and organization	Schools may come to rely on such intense support and may not have resources or empowerment to continue on their own

	High financial cost either by school or organization
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MODEL : Conferences and Summits

Conferences can take many forms but are most often large in scale. They bring together multiple people and organizations to a central location with a focus on garden education. There are many models, but most often are multiple days and include experts in the SGSO field. Conferences are mutli-faceted and have a combination of workshops, speakers and field experiences.

Examples and Resources on Regional Conferences and Summits with an Emphasis on School Gardens:

- ★ [University of Minnesota Schoolyard Gardens Conference](#)
- ★ [The Bionutrient Food Association's Soil & Nutrition Conference](#)
- ★ [2023 Regional Garden Based Learning Summit](#)
- ★ [California Farm to School Conference](#)

Resources on Hosting State and Regional Farm to School Summits or Conferences

- ★ [National Farm to School Network Regional and State Summit Best Practices](#)

Pros and Cons of Hosting Conferences and Summits:

PROS	CONS
Networking options around common organizational goals (nutrition, academics, cooking etc.)	High financial investment. Usually needs an outside funder or significant donations from venues, speakers, etc.
Guest speakers and content experts can help round out content	Requires a lot of time and personnel resources to put on
Multiple options/tracks - provides choice in professional development	Marketing and/or selection process to fill conference to capacity = costs/ time

MODEL: Webinars

A webinar is an online class, seminar or other presentation that takes place on the Internet, allowing participants in different locations to see and hear the presenter, ask questions, and interact. For garden-based organizations, these can be used in many ways, from leading “how-to” sessions, network planning or to increase content knowledge.

Examples of Garden Education Webinars:

- ★ [Webinars from the School Garden Support Org Network](#)

- ★ [Kids Gardening Webinar Library](#)
- ★ [FoodPrintsTV Cooking & Gardening Skill Videos](#)

Pros and Cons of Hosting Webinars:

PROS	CONS
Lower investment of time and money and more affordable for users.	Audience interaction is limited
Can reach group live and after through recordings	Body language, from presenter and audience, can't be viewed
Easier for attendees to join - no travel time, etc.	Technical difficulties can arise
Easier to create more specialized trainings and to reach a larger group	Not as much opportunity for networking and relationship building

MODEL: Video and Other Online Training Tools

Online tools for garden-based education can be used in many ways. These are particularly effective ways for educators to access information on “How-To” questions, find links to lessons, watch videos, or participate in group forums. Video-sharing sites like [Vimeo](#) and [YouTube](#) are places you can share recorded content.

Examples of Videos that Focus on Gardening and Cooking Education:

- ★ [Edible Schoolyard Project’s Instructional Videos](#)
- ★ [GrowVeg Gardening Videos](#)
- ★ [Life Lab Garden Education Videos](#)

Tips and Tools for Making Training Videos:

- ★ [“How to Create a Training Video”](#) from Mindflash
- ★ [“Tools to Use in Making Training Videos”](#) from Apowersoft

Typical Financial Investment Required: Varies - There are ways to make this very cost effective or more expensive depending on how professional you would like the final material. A cost effective method is to use students from a local university who can be paid through a work study program or offered credits. Another option is to plan and practice your video series ahead of time and hire a company to film the series of videos all in one or two days in the same location.

Pros and Cons of Video and Other Online Training Tools

PROS	CONS
Can reach educators when and where they need it	Audience cannot interact or ask questions
Provides support when staff is not available	Can be costly and time consuming to create, esp if working with video professionals
Able to provide content remotely when live & in person isn't available	Technical difficulties can arise
More affordable for users	Some don't find videos to be as engaging as live trainings
Can be made available for a long time	No opportunity for networking and relationship building
Great asset to share with funders	

MODEL: Workshops

Workshops are in-person trainings, often for groups of 30 or fewer, usually lasting anywhere from 1 hr to a few days. Gathering in person and in smaller groups allows for hands-on, experiential learning and robust participant interaction. Potential target audiences can include classroom teachers, food service providers, community members and the broader school community.

Types of Workshops with Examples:

One-Time Workshops: These workshops are generally announced on a calendar and made open to any interested teachers, educators, food service staff, parent volunteers, etc. They can be free or have an associated fee. Many organizations offer a calendar of workshops for people to choose from, with topics ranging from building compost to early childhood ed in the garden to nutrition and science in the garden.

Examples of One-Time Workshops:

- ★ [Grow to Learn Stem Facilitator Agenda](#)
- ★ [Life Lab's Workshops](#)
- ★ [Seattle Tilth Workshops](#)
- ★ [Sage Garden Project Training Workshop Agenda](#)

Pros and Cons of One-Time Workshops:

- **Pros:** Meets a variety of needs and skill-sets. Participants/schools/organizations can pick and choose based on need.
- **Cons:** Doesn't necessarily incorporate or provide ongoing support, resources, or follow up. Cost varies based on facilitating organization.

Workshop Series: These include scheduled workshops on specific, targeted topics over the course of a specific time frame (typically a season or a year). A workshop series can be delivered as a one-time package offered to partnering sites/orgs, or as a yearly service to provide ongoing support to schools.

Examples of Workshop Series:

A. Series Built into Year Long PD

- [Connecticut School Garden Resource Center PD Series](#)
 - **Description:** Professional development package built around seasonal skills positions will need. For returners, it can be differentiated into more advanced levels.

B. Customized for Schools or Districts

- [Rogue Valley Farm to School](#)
 - **Description:** RVF2S oversees volunteer [School Garden Coordinators](#) who manage a school garden in their community. RVF2S coordinates monthly [skill-based workshops](#)

Pros of Workshop Series: Customizable based on needs and audience. Series can address many topics & needs and provide ongoing, follow up support as people become more and more experienced with garden education. Can work with the school/district to find funding for PD.

Cons of Workshop Series: Without a clear incentive, attendance may be low.

Cost: \$\$\$\$\$

PROS	CONS
Can allow attendees to join which topics suit them.	Without clear incentives, attendance can be low.
Can provide the same workshops year after year, requiring less prep time.	Doesn't necessarily incorporate or provide ongoing support, resources, or follow up.
Can be incorporated into school district's PD schedule	Can be time and cost intensive to develop and run

MODEL: Garden Education Professional Learning Communities

Classroom teachers support each other in using school gardens to enhance curriculum and increase student engagement. They recruit a small group (usually up to twelve) K-8 classroom teachers to find new ways of working together to use school gardens to meet classroom learning goals and the needs of their students. Timeline is generally outlined for a 1-year commitment (i.e. meetings, lesson implementation, reflection & evaluation).

Examples of Professional Learning Communities for Garden Education

- [SGSO Network Peer Learning Communities](#)
- [Cornell Garden-Based Learning](#)
- [The University of Arizona--Community and School Garden Program](#)
- [Guide to Facilitating Professional Learning Communities](#)

Pros of Professional Learning Communities: Graduate credit available. Peer to peer learning and development. Working together for over 1 year's time.

Cons of Professional Learning Communities: Evening & long-term commitment required

PROS	CONS
Peer to peer learning, networking & support	More time commitment from attendees over a longer period of time
Requires less intensive instruction & cost	Often in evenings or off-times
Community building	Not as much direct instruction & support

MODEL: School Garden Education Intensives

Weeklong intensives or extended courses for school teams (educators, food service staff, parent leaders, etc.)

Examples of Garden Education Intensives:

- [Occidental Arts and Ecology Center School Garden Teacher Training](#)
- [Edible Schoolyard Academy](#)
- [Oregon State University Garden Teacher Certificate](#)

PROS	CONS
Extended learning: deeper dive into topics, skill building, goal setting/planning.	Significant time & financial investment for attendees - might not be accessible
More time together as a cohort: Community building	Doesn't include follow up support
	Significant time & financial investment for presenters

Pros of Intensives: Time for a mix of technical skill building, content delivery and goal setting/planning integrated into agenda. Brings together many people for extended, rich learning opportunities.

Cons of Intensives: Not always accessible to all school communities; does not include ongoing support following the intensive. Can require significant financial investment for SGSO and also for participants.

KEY CHALLENGES OR QUESTIONS RELATED TO THIS KEY ACTIVITY

What are the most common challenges and questions we have about this Key Activity?

The greatest challenges related to providing professional development are often related to cost and funding. While some models are inexpensive in terms of materials, they tend to be cost intensive based on staffing. It is suggested that organizations pick a model, or models, that not only fit their organizational goals, but also links to what local (or national) funders are looking to support.

Separate from funding, professional development provided by SGSOs must fit within the school structure for PD. This tends to be difficult, especially within school districts that schedule all school-based PD.

NEW IDEAS OR STRATEGIES TO EXPLORE

The working group had specific interest in exploring implementation best practices nationally. While there were not conclusions made about this, the group came up with the following questions.

- What strategies do organizations use to get access to teachers and schools so that PD can happen? Who is the best to go through -- District level? Schools? States?
- Do hybrid models work best or singular models?
- Are there funders who want to see particular models implemented that are not part of organizational models, and how do SGSOs rectify this?