

Using volunteers to help support school food growing

Food growing can provide many exciting and innovative opportunities for pupils and teachers, but what if you need more hands on deck? As well as lacking in time, you may be lacking in school staff with skills and confidence. If so, volunteers are a great way to tap into time and knowledge that you may not have on the school staff team. Below are some ideas you may wish to consider:

- **Decide HOW OFTEN you need a volunteer and WHAT you want them to do.** If you require an area to be dug over and replanted, one off corporate volunteering projects may be required. If a weekly gardening club assistant is what you need, you'll need someone willing to commit longer term.
- **Create a short job description** - of what is expected, and how the school will support. Does the volunteer need specific skills? What are their objectives? How will their objectives be monitored? Are they required to have a DBS check already? Who will be their chief contact at the school?
- **Ask your local volunteer centre** www.volunteering.org.uk/where-do-i-start if they can find a volunteer for you. Cast your net widely! Also ask parents, grandparents and your extended network via your pupils – these volunteers are often very willing to be involved as they have a vested interest in the school. Try the following websites to advertise your opportunity:
Capital Growth: www.capitalgrowth.org/volunteering
Team London: http://volunteerteam.london.gov.uk/about_organizations
- **Organise volunteer and growing training** for your new volunteers. Food Growing Schools: London runs training events. Email admin@foodgrowingschools.org to enquire.
- **Talk to other local schools about their garden volunteers.** Plenty of schools have excellent networks of volunteers and may be willing to share resources.
- **Stay in contact.** Make sure you know what the garden volunteers are up to – a garden should be linked to what is going on in the school and embedded in the curriculum. Make sure all pupils have a chance to use the space – could the garden be used to host lessons or as a way to teach geography, science, even Drama? Could the volunteer assist?
- **Build on their work!** If the growing project is giving your school results, why not consider expanding it or extending to all pupils? Many schools have seen such value in growing that they take on paid, part time staff to develop this work. Perhaps using Pupil Premiums could allow your school to do this?

Get in touch for more information about our volunteer and food growing training opportunities.

www.foodgrowingschools.org

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