POLICY:	SCHOOL FOOD GARDENS			#	502
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APPROVAL/REVISION DATE:	April 23, 2024	EFFECTIVE DATE:	April 24, 2024	REVIEW DATE:	April 24, 2029
CROSS REFERENCE:	Appendix A – Guidelines for School Food Gardens				

POLICY

1. The Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board recognizes the important role that school food gardens can play in students' learning. Garden-based learning can enhance academic achievement through the integration of hands-on experiences into diverse subjects such as math, science, nutrition and environmental education. Garden-based learning allows students to discover and experience fresh, healthy food and to make healthy food choices.

2. The Board is committed to healthy food environments. School food gardens allow for the incorporation of fresh, local fruit and vegetables into the school community. A school food garden can play a role in increasing the options of healthy food for the students and their families by providing space for the production of food through school gardens.

3. By contributing to the greening of school grounds and the building of green spaces for neighbourhoods in Thunder Bay, the Board promotes enhanced social and emotional development in students.

4. The Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board recognizes the many benefits to developing and maintaining school food gardens including opportunities for learning and increased access to healthy food. Therefore, the Board encourages and supports the development of school food gardens.

GUIDELINES

1. Guidelines for School Food Gardens (Appendix A) have been developed to help the school community carry out a successful and sustainable project that is consistent with the policy statements above.

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL FOOD GARDENS

The Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board encourages and supports the development of school food gardens for learning, for increased access to healthy food, for community and social development as well as for the beautification and greening of the schoolyard.

Guiding Principles

The following guidelines are to be used by the school community to plan and implement a successful, sustainable food garden.

A school food garden will be designed

- To embrace our Catholic Virtues of caring, social responsibility, inclusiveness, co-operation, team-work, consensus and collaborative processes in the development of the garden space.
- To ensure the involvement of children (daycare) and students (schools) throughout the planning, design, construction and maintenance of the garden.
- To give children and students the opportunity to plant, harvest, prepare, and eat food they have grown.
- To integrate food gardens, food preparation, eating experiences, and nutritional education into the school curriculum for all grades.
- To ensure that the garden space is used to deliver, and is connected to, curriculum expectations.
- To encourage the use of environmental 'best practices' for organic gardening (pesticide- and herbicide-free, no treated lumber); water use; soil building; and, harvesting and seed saving.
- To support children and students in the growing of culturally diverse foods and to explore the varied food and agriculture traditions represented by the diverse populations of Thunder Bay. Whenever possible, schools should engage with individuals from cultural communities to learn protocols and customs for their agricultural practices.
- To promote environmental stewardship by involving students and the local community in the ongoing maintenance of the garden space, including weeding, watering, garbage removal and compost care.
- To respect the rights and responsibilities of the Board’s custodial staff as per their collective bargaining agreement.
- To ensure that no poisonous plants are used in the school garden.
- To encourage the use of heirloom fruit and vegetable varieties where possible.
- To ensure that the garden is sustainable through ongoing maintenance throughout the school year and that there is a plan for sustainability in subsequent years.
- To promote learning partnerships with local organizations.

Steps To Creating A School Food Garden

1. School Food Garden project is created and approved by the school Principal

2. Approval-in-principle is obtained from the school Superintendent and Plant Department

3. A detailed written plan is submitted to the school Superintendent. The plan includes the following:

    a. Reference to curriculum documents and expectations
    b. Garden design, including a visual layout of space to be used
    c. Project timeline
    d. Possible funding sources
    e. Garden Installation Plan, including timeline, resources, individuals responsible, involvement of classes by grade, connections to the curriculum
    f. Garden maintenance and management plan, including the assignment of specific responsibilities related to
        i. Maintenance schedule, including summer months
        ii. Plan for sustainability throughout the current school year and into the next school year
        iii. Ongoing involvement of students, children, staff, parents, and volunteers
    g. Plan for the use of foods produced

4. Final approval by school Superintendent

5. Implementation of the written plan as approved