

DIG in Schools



A tool for Developing Integrated Gardens in schools



FY25 CONSULTANT GUIDE

for AZ Health Zone Administration of the DIG in Schools Tool

v1.0



Let it be gnome that this version of the Consultant Guide was last updated August 2024.

Contents

What is the DIG in Schools Tool?.....	3
When Do I Use the DIG in Schools Tool?.....	5
Digging in with the School Community.....	7
How Do I Complete the DIG in Schools Tool?	8
Appendices.....	10



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What is the DIG in Schools Tool?

SNAPSHOT OF THE DIG IN SCHOOLS TOOL

- Stands for **D**eveloping **I**ntegrated **G**ardens in Schools, a four-step cycle of improvement to help schools grow and sustain their garden programs
- Developed by the AZ Health Zone State Evaluation Team (SET) based on two years of intensive research and collaboration with school garden experts from Local Implementing Agencies (LIAs), state agencies, and local communities
- Includes four sections and 50 items, each of which is an idea for integrating the garden more fully into the school community
- Measures important settings-level indicators in the [SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework](#)

WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE?

- Guidance for when and how to use DIG in Schools, including ways to engage the school community
- How to become a certified DIG in Schools Consultant for the AZ Health Zone
- How to complete the DIG in Schools Tool and submit the completed tool to the SET
- Appendices: The DIG in Schools Rating Guide and Tool

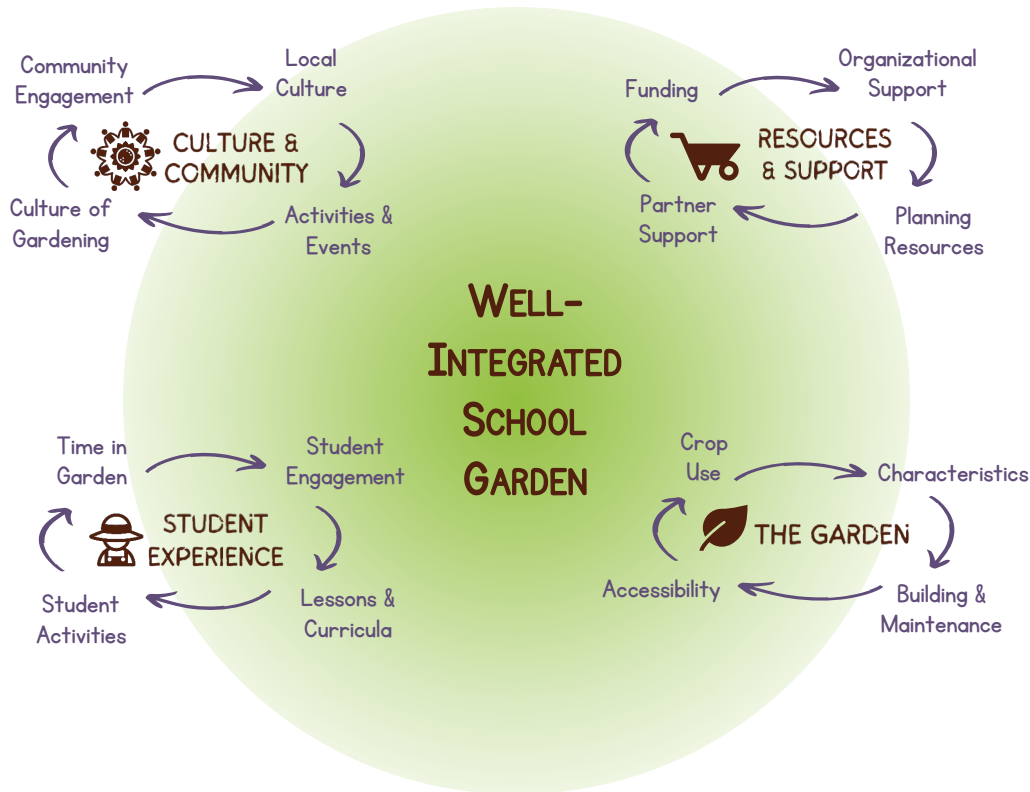
AZ HEALTH ZONE GUIDELINES FOR THE DIG IN SCHOOLS TOOL

- Local Implementing Agencies (LIAs) who support School-Based Agriculture, specifically school gardens, can use the DIG in Schools Tool at any stage of garden development. This includes gardens that are just getting started, existing gardens looking to expand, and gardens that have been dormant.
- LIA staff who use the DIG in Schools Tool must first complete the online Consultant training and pass the certification quiz given at the end of that training. [CLICK HERE](#) to go directly to the training.
- LIA staff are encouraged to engage the school community in DIG in Schools. One or more people may complete the DIG in Schools tool. **Groups who complete the tool should come to consensus around their ratings**, allowing the certified LIA Consultant to submit a single completed version to the SET.
- Consultants can email a copy of the completed DIG in Schools tool as *either* a filled pdf form *or* a scanned hardcopy to: azhzevaluation@arizona.edu. The email should include the full name of the certified LIA staff person submitting the tool and which LIA they represent.
- LIAs can move through the entire DIG in Schools Cycle of Change in one school year, or they may take longer. It is okay to vary the time between the initial ("pre") DIG in Schools tool and the follow-up ("post"), when you see what has changed. Timelines will generally range from a few months to 2 years.

WHAT IS A WELL-INTEGRATED SCHOOL GARDEN?

DIG in Schools is designed to help schools develop a **well-integrated garden**. A well-integrated school garden (Burt et al., 2017): “is maintained...at or near a school, is primarily used as a learning environment to create meaningful experiences for students, is a valued part of the school’s culture, and is sustained over time.”

How Do the DIG in Schools Tool Sections Work Together For an Integrated Garden?



In a well-integrated garden, **Resources & Support** are in place to maintain **The Garden** over time and connect it to the **Student Experience**, including formal and informal student activities. **Culture & Community** are embedded in all aspects of the school’s garden program, which engages the entire school community in gardening and celebrates the importance of gardening to the school. Together, these connections and the involvement of many people make it more likely that the garden will thrive and persist over time.

HOW DOES THE DIG IN SCHOOLS TOOL WORK?

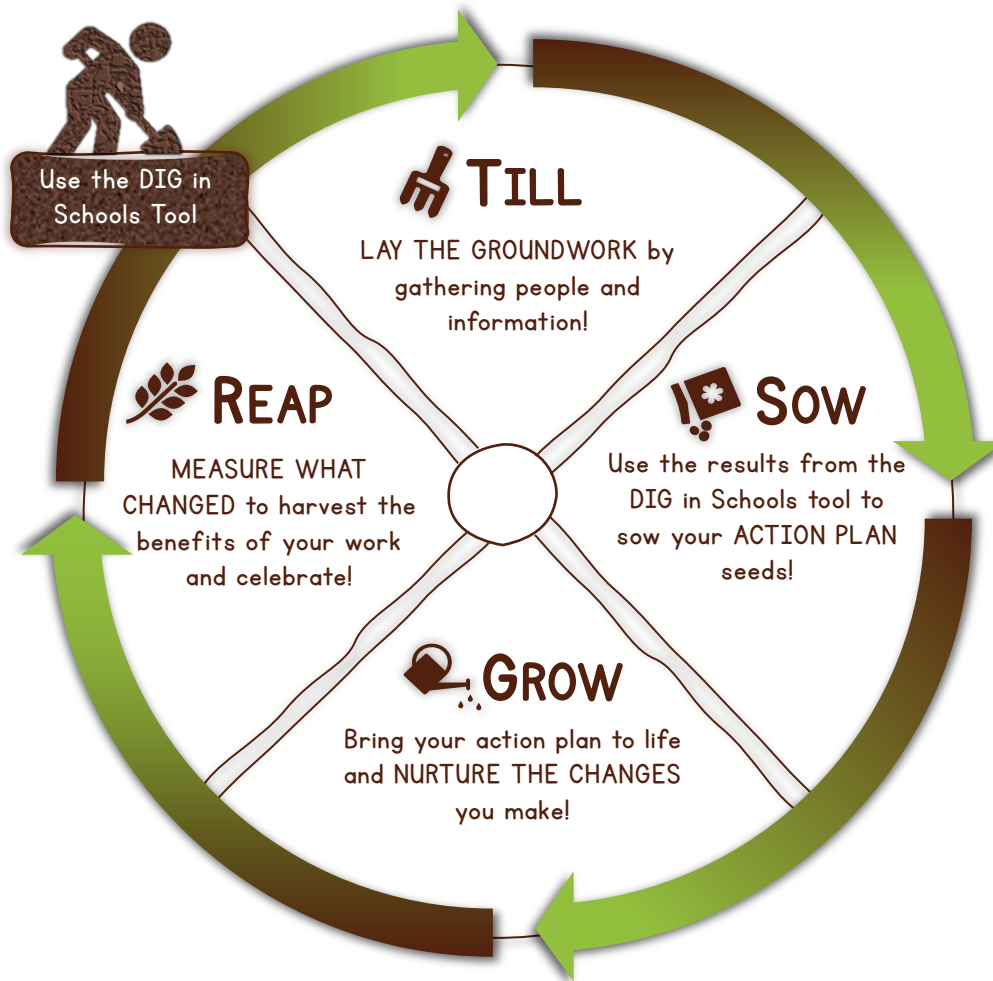
Each tool item is an idea for how to integrate the garden more fully into the school community. Schools can use the tool to rate their current garden program, select items to work on, and track growth over time.

- Some items are low-cost and easy to do, while other ideas can involve more time and resources.
- Not all items are appropriate for all schools. Schools can choose ideas that work well for their setting.
- Gardens change over time. This tool offers a sense of how the *current* garden program functions.

When Do I Use the DIG in Schools Tool?

CAPs. LIAs who plan to support school gardens in their Community Action Plan (CAP) can now use the DIG in Schools **Cycle of Change** and Tool to guide this work! The first time you complete the tool is during the “till” stage below, and the next time is your follow-up, during the “reap” stage.


The DIG in Schools Cycle of Change



SEEDS. LIAs can continue to report your support for school gardens under Childhood: School & Other Youth-Based Systems. Most LIAs will report DIG in Schools work as a School-Based Agriculture activity. LIAs who prioritize student or resident engagement may also report this under Community Engagement.

LIA EVALUATION PLAN. Each year, the SET works with LIAs to complete the LIA Evaluation Plan. This plan lists all evaluations that an LIA expects to complete for that fiscal year and helps the LIA staff and the SET track which evaluations have been completed and which remain to be completed each year.

When you complete your FY25 LIA Evaluation Plan, simply specify the number of DIG in Schools Tools you plan to support. Below is a snippet of the LIA Evaluation Plan with a little extra gnome wisdom.

Childhood School Systems <i>Youth-based Agriculture</i> <i>Community Engagement</i>					<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Not Yet Certified: CLICK HERE to complete the training. Submission Deadline:
	DIG In Schools	School Name(s) (pre/post)	Enter total # PREs	Enter total # POSTs	
	 (Ctrl) ▼				



Let it be gnome that since this is the first year DIG in Schools is available, almost all LIAs will only have plans to complete the initial (or "pre") DIG in Schools Tool!

As you complete your LIA Evaluation Plan, be sure to:

- Reference your CAPs to ensure that your LIA Evaluation Plan aligns. If your CAPs describe support for a school garden, this is a signal that DIG in Schools may be a great fit!
- Verify that the school is interested in partnering with you on their garden before finalizing your DIG in Schools plans. In keeping with the principles of equity, community engagement, and trauma awareness, it is important to reach out early to gauge the school's interest, availability, and needs.
- Only include the number of schools with which you have solid garden plans. Later you may submit more if you add new schools or complete a follow-up DIG in Schools tool sooner than intended.



Digging in with the School Community

The AZ Health Zone encourages LIA staff to partner with a diverse group of school community members on the DIG in Schools Cycle of Change. Think about who is *interested* in working with you, who *makes decisions* that affect the garden, who *knows* about the garden, and who is *enthusiastic* about working on the garden program.

Because every school-LIA relationship is unique, we provide a **Spectrum for Digging in with the School Community** to help guide your engagement decisions. This Spectrum does not include the INFORM or CONSULT levels, which are insufficient to make and sustain DIG in Schools changes.

Spectrum for Digging in with the School Community



EMPOWER

LIA staff give as-needed support to school community members who complete the DIG in Schools tool and move through the Cycle of Change. LIA staff support consensus building for tool ratings and submit the completed tool to the SET.

COLLABORATE

LIA staff co-complete the DIG in Schools tool with school community members, coming to consensus around final ratings. School representatives use results to move through the Cycle of Change. LIA staff submit the completed tool to the SET.

INVOLVE

LIA staff complete the DIG in Schools tool by talking with school community members. They present findings to school community members, who plan and act based on results. LIA staff submit the completed tool to the SET.

LIAs can use this Spectrum to tailor their DIG in Schools engagement to each school. The DIG in Schools Consultant can INVOLVE, COLLABORATE with, or EMPOWER one or more members of the school community. This includes garden leaders, School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs), teachers, maintenance/facilities staff, school administrators, other school staff, students, families, and/or community volunteers.



Let it be gnome that as more people from the school community are involved, DIG in Schools changes may become more sustainable!

Remember, the AZ Health Zone defines its Community Engagement activity as directly engaging **SNAP-eligible residents**. When you report your DIG in Schools activities in SEEDS, please reserve the Community Engagement activity for working directly with **students, families, or resident volunteers**.

How Do I Complete the DIG in Schools Tool?

BECOME A CERTIFIED DIG IN SCHOOLS CONSULTANT. LIA staff who support DIG in Schools must first complete the DIG in Schools Consultant training. [CLICK HERE](#) to begin your training now.



Let it be gnome that LIA staff cannot progress to support DIG in Schools until they complete the DIG in Schools training and pass the certification quiz!

If it has been a while since your training, be sure to refresh your familiarity with DIG in Schools before starting the Cycle of Change and meeting with your school partner!

START THE CYCLE OF CHANGE

TILL: Lay the groundwork by gathering people and information!

- It is important to first determine *who* has the information you need to complete the DIG in Schools Tool and *how* you will complete the tool (ex., as a group, with students, etc.).
- Schedule a time to connect with the right people. This can include a variety of school community members who lead or support the school's gardening efforts. See the Spectrum for Digging in with the School Community on page 7 for more guidance.
- After assembling your team, complete your initial DIG in Schools tool. To do this, simply follow the instructions on the DIG in Schools Tool and reference the **DIG in Schools Rating Guide** (see Appendix) as needed. In addition, consider taking photos of the current school garden. Finally, don't forget to make sure your school partners understand the Cycle of Change, including the completion of a follow-up tool later on.



Let it be gnome that the DIG in Schools tool can be completed as a **printed hardcopy AND as a fillable pdf form** that auto-calculates totals for the ratings you enter.

- You can bring printed hardcopies for each school representative to be able to mark up your tools and rate items independently.
- The fillable pdf may be helpful to share with school representatives via email.
- The fillable pdf may also be a great way for you to finalize your ratings into a single tool after your group comes to a consensus!

SOW: Use the results from the DIG in Schools tool to sow your action plan seeds!

- First, submit the completed DIG in Schools Tool to the SET. To do this, simply email the filled pdf form or scanned hardcopy to: azhzevaluation@arizona.edu. Your email should include the *full name of the certified LIA staff person* submitting the tool, and *which LIA they represent*.
- The SET will send you back a list of tailored **DIG in Schools recommendations** based on your ratings within 4-6 weeks of your submission. You may await these recommendations before developing your action plan, or you may choose to start action planning sooner. It's up to you and your school partner. You are also welcome to present recommendations however you like to your school partner.
- As you review the DIG in Schools tool results and begin developing an action plan, you may also use the **AZ Health Zone's DIG in Schools action planning resources** found on the [AZ Health Zone website](#).

GROW: Bring your action plan to life and nurture the changes you make! Visit the [AZ Health Zone website](#) for helpful implementation resources.

REAP: Measure what changed to harvest the benefits of your work and celebrate!

- After implementing changes, complete the DIG in Schools tool again. This can take anywhere from a few months to two years, depending on the school. Submit the follow-up DIG in Schools tool to the SET using the same email as you did for your initial submission. Meanwhile, look back at your initial DIG in Schools Tool ratings. What has changed? Take time to celebrate these changes with your school partner!
- The SET will review your results and send you back kudos for any changes made, along with a fresh set of tailored recommendations that you may optionally use to begin another Cycle of Change. At this stage, you can choose to continue working with your school partner on further integrating their garden, continue supporting the changes they already made, and/or shift your focus to another interested school.



Appendices

DIG IN SCHOOLS RATING GUIDE

DIG IN SCHOOLS TOOL (ENGLISH)



The DIG in Schools tool uses ratings of 0 - Not in Place Right Now, 1 - Partly in Place Right Now, 2 - Fully in Place Right Now to rate each item. How does a person decide what rating to assign? This Guide is designed to help!

GENERAL TIPS

1. **GO WITH YOUR INTUITION.** After all, DIG in Schools is intended to help *you* identify areas of interest to your school's unique community.

- 🍃 If you feel like something is only a little bit there, but there is way more work to be done, it makes sense to rate that item as a 0 (*not in place right now, or generally not done*).
- 🍃 If you feel like something is "kind of" done by your school, but that there's room to grow, it makes sense to rate that item as a 1 (*partly in place right now, or sometimes done*).
- 🍃 If you feel like something is not perfect but that it has been addressed by the school in a way that already works for you, it makes sense to rate that item as a 2 (*fully in place right now, or usually done*).

2. **RATE ITEMS BASED ON WHERE YOUR SCHOOL GARDEN PROGRAM IS RIGHT NOW.** Answer based on your current operations, *not* where you would like the garden to be or where it has been.
3. **TAKE NOTES.** Use the Notes section, or even the margins around each item, to write down your thoughts about items as you rate them. Do you see potential to improve on that item? Is there something you know about the item that makes you confident in the rating? Jot these down so that you can share your ideas with others *and* remind your future self of how you rated the item! This will be especially helpful when you return to the tool later and can *use the same criteria* to see if anything has changed.
4. **COME TO A CONSENSUS WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.** Maybe you start off thinking that an item is a 2, but another garden leader shares that they would give it a 1 because there is so much more they would like to see achieved for that item. As you talk through your ideas, you can decide together what rating makes the most sense!
5. **STILL IN DOUBT? REFER TO THE DETAILED RATING GUIDANCE BELOW.** This guidance is intended as a back-up guide, after your intuition and note taking. It's item-by-item guidance includes:

- 🍃 Gnome wisdom (🧝 icon) with more information about the **HIGHLIGHTED TERM** in the notes after each section.
- 🍃 A rating rubric to help you decide upon a rating of 0, 1, or 2 if you are unsure.

Remember, you do NOT need to stick to this guidance in a rigid way! The most important things in the DIG in Schools Cycle of Change are that you and your school community can:

- 🍃 **USE THE RESULTS** to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- 🍃 **SEE WHAT CHANGED WHEN YOU USE THE TOOL AGAIN** by *using the same rating criteria* you used the first time.



RESOURCES & SUPPORT ITEMS


0 – Not in Place

1 – Partly in Place

2 – Fully in Place

1. The school has at least one very active garden person, like a garden champion or designated leader.	The school has <i>no one</i> supporting or maintaining the garden right now.	<i>At least one</i> person provides <i>some</i> garden support at some times.	<i>At least one</i> person is currently <i>very active</i> in supporting and maintaining the garden.
2. New garden leaders or champions (paid or volunteer) are regularly identified to ensure continuity.	Right now, <i>no</i> processes exist to identify any new garden leaders.	New garden leaders are <i>sometimes</i> identified, but there is <i>no formal process</i> .	There is a <i>formal process</i> to <i>regularly</i> identify new garden leaders.
3. A school or district group of at least 3 people meets regularly to discuss the garden program.	<i>No one</i> currently meets to discuss the garden.	<i>At least 2</i> people <i>sometimes</i> discuss the garden.	<i>At least 3</i> people meet regularly to discuss the garden.
4. The school is CURRENTLY connected to at least one garden support system (ex., Farm to School Network) that offers opportunities to network with others, access resources, and/or learn.	<i>No one</i> at the school is currently connected to any garden network or learning/resource hubs.	This year, <i>at least one</i> person <i>occasionally</i> connects with a garden network or learning/resource hub.	<i>Multiple</i> people <i>regularly</i> connect to a garden network or learning/resource hub, and/or <i>1</i> person is <i>very</i> involved.
5. The school is CURRENTLY connected to at least one local organization or person (ex., AZ Health Zone, AmeriCorps, Master Gardeners) for technical assistance with the school's garden program. <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	<i>No one</i> at the school is currently connected to any garden-related technical assistance (TA). Check N/A if no TA needed.	This year, <i>at least one</i> person <i>sometimes</i> connects with an external source for garden-related TA. Check N/A if no TA needed.	<i>Multiple</i> people or <i>one very involved</i> person <i>regularly</i> connects with an external source for garden-related TA. Check N/A if no TA needed.
6. The school has adequate information about how to fund garden program activities.	The school has <i>no</i> funding information at this time.	The school has <i>some</i> funding information.	The school currently has <i>all needed</i> funding information.
7. The school has adequate funding for this year's planned garden program activities.	The school does <i>not</i> have funding to do the planned garden activities this year.	The school has enough funding for <i>many</i> of the planned activities this year.	The school has <i>sustained</i> funding in place for <i>most</i> garden program activities.
8. The school administration (ex., Principal) provides staff with DEDICATED TIME for planning, implementing, and/or evaluating the school garden program (ex., building or tending the garden, teaching lessons). 	Administrators do <i>not</i> currently provide dedicated time for a garden program.	Administrators <i>occasionally</i> provide dedicated time for the garden program.	Administrators provide <i>regular</i> dedicated time for the garden program during the current year.
9. Teachers and/or other staff receive gardening education and training (ex., core curricula, how to's).	<i>No</i> school staff currently receive professional development in gardening.	The school <i>occasionally</i> offers gardening education/training to some staff.	The school offers <i>regular</i> gardening education/training to teachers and/or other staff.
10. The school has enough supplies for all students in the garden AT THE SAME TIME to participate.	The school often <i>lacks</i> enough student supplies.	The school has <i>some</i> student supplies but could use more.	All students doing a garden activity have <i>enough</i> supplies.
11. The school administration ACTIVELY PROMOTES the school's garden program (ex., in newsletters or talks). 	Administrators do <i>not</i> currently promote the school garden program.	<i>At least one</i> administrator <i>sometimes</i> promotes a school garden program.	<i>At least one</i> administrator <i>regularly</i> promotes the school garden program.
12. The Local Wellness Policy states that schools have a garden program. (Note: check the district or school Local Wellness Policy.).	The <u>Local Wellness Policy</u> does <i>not</i> mention school gardens.	The <u>Local Wellness Policy</u> <i>encourages</i> or <i>vaguely references</i> school gardens.	The <u>Local Wellness Policy</u> <i>requires</i> a school garden program.
13. The school has a GARDEN PROGRAM GUIDE IN HARDCOPY AND/OR ELECTRONIC FORM that includes: [Check all that apply and follow scoring instructions in the box.]	Currently, there is <i>no</i> hardcopy or electronic guide with any of the components listed.	The current hardcopy and/or electronic guide has <i>1-4</i> of the components listed.	The current hardcopy and/or electronic guide has <i>5 or more</i> of the components listed.

 **DEDICATED TIME:** Any time that school administrators reserve for any relevant staff to focus on garden program activities.

 **ACTIVELY PROMOTES:** Any way of encouraging garden participation and/or support for garden activities to staff, families, and/or the entire school community. Promotion goes beyond simple approval to have a school garden and reflects enthusiasm for the garden.



THE GARDEN ITEMS


0 – Not in Place

1 – Partly in Place

2 – Fully in Place

1. The school has at least one type of garden (ex., raised bed, in ground, hydroponic, pollinator).	The school does <i>not</i> have a physical garden right now.	Right now, there is a <i>partly developed</i> physical garden.	A physical garden is <i>currently active</i> at the school.
2. The school has all of the tools and materials needed to build and/or maintain the garden (ex., lumber, soil, shade cloth, shovels, hoses, any needed power supply, water source).	As of now, the school only has <i>a few</i> of the needed supplies to build or maintain the garden.	As of now, the school has <i>many but not all</i> of the needed supplies to build and/or maintain the garden.	As of now, the school has <i>all or nearly all</i> of the needed supplies to build and/or maintain the garden.
3. The school has a suitable garden space for all intended use(s), like growing and teaching.	A suitable garden space has <i>not</i> yet been identified.	Some space exists, but <i>more is needed</i> for all use(s).	<i>Enough</i> space is currently available for all garden use(s).
4. The garden area has enough natural (or artificial) lighting and shade for the intended use(s).	The current garden has <i>insufficient</i> lighting/shade.	The current garden has <i>most needed</i> lighting/shade.	The current garden generally has <i>sufficient</i> lighting/shade.
5. The watering system is suitable for the garden type, school maintenance capacity, and school goals.	There is <i>no</i> watering system currently in place.	A watering system is in place, but <i>more work is needed</i> on it.	The current watering system is <i>well-matched</i> to the garden program's needs and uses.
6. The garden has sufficient drainage. <input type="checkbox"/> N/A (ex., hydroponic or flood crop)	There is <i>no</i> drainage system in place.	A drainage system is in place but <i>needs more work</i> .	The garden drainage system is <i>well-suited</i> to needs and uses.
7. The watering system is checked regularly by a designated person or group.	The watering system is <i>rarely or never</i> checked.	Someone <i>occasionally</i> checks the watering system.	A <i>designated</i> person/group checks the system <i>regularly</i> .
8. The watering system addresses water scarcity in dry climates like the desert (ex., using rainwater harvesting or hydroponics). <input type="checkbox"/> N/A (not a dry/arid climate)	The watering system does <i>not</i> currently account for water scarcity in dry climates in any way.	<i>Some</i> parts of the watering system consider water scarcity, but <i>more work is needed</i> .	The current watering system is <i>designed</i> to address water scarcity in arid climates, ex. by conserving or catching water.
9. The soil (or water, if hydroponic) receives nutrients/soil amendments, as needed.	<i>No</i> nutrients are added, even if they would help.	Nutrients are <i>sometimes</i> added if needed.	Nutrients are <i>added</i> based on testing and growth patterns.
10. Pest management (ex., fencing, safe spraying) reduces the impact of insects, rodents, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> N/A.	Pest management is <i>not</i> currently addressed in any way. Check N/A if no pests threaten garden.	Pest management is <i>partly</i> addressed but <i>needs more work</i> . Check N/A if no pests threaten garden.	Pest management is <i>fully</i> addressed in a way that aligns with needs & uses. Check N/A if no pests threaten garden.
11. The garden is modified, as needed, in response to planned and unplanned ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES (ex., weather, new pests, school interest in new uses). 	The garden is <i>rarely</i> modified as conditions/circumstances change.	The garden is <i>sometimes</i> modified as conditions/circumstances change, but this is sporadic.	The garden is <i>regularly</i> monitored for changing conditions/circumstances and modified as these change.
12. The garden has sufficient, easy-to-access storage for tools, seeds, and other supplies.	There is <i>no</i> storage area available for the garden.	The current storage <i>needs work</i> to accommodate uses.	The current storage is <i>big enough</i> and <i>easy to access</i> .
13. Everyone responsible for the garden has full access to it (ex., has gate or shed keys).	It is currently <i>difficult</i> for many to access the garden.	<i>Some but not all</i> who need <i>easy</i> garden access have it.	<i>All</i> people who use the garden have <i>easy</i> access to it.
14. When active, the garden is regularly tended (ex., watered, checked for pests) by a DESIGNATED person or group. <i>Note: Many gardens are seasonally dormant. Answer for active seasons, only.</i>	<i>No</i> person or group currently tends the physical garden (neither designated nor informally understood to do so).	It is <i>generally understood</i> that a person or group <i>regularly</i> tends the garden, or a formally designated person <i>sometimes</i> tends it.	A person or group is currently designated to <i>regularly</i> tend the physical garden. This should be a <i>formal designation</i> (ex., in writing, position title, etc.).
15. The garden is accessible to adults and students with physical mobility impairments (ex., people using wheelchairs can access and participate in the garden similar to other people).	<i>No</i> physical garden areas are currently accessible to those with physical mobility impairments.	<i>Some but not all</i> garden areas are accessible to those with physical mobility impairments right now.	<i>All</i> physical garden areas are currently accessible to those with physical mobility impairments.

16. The garden space is inviting and comfortable (ex., painted signs, shaded benches, work tables).	The garden space is <i>generally unappealing or uncomfortable</i> to be in.	<i>Some</i> areas of the garden are appealing & comfortable.	<i>Most or all</i> areas of the garden are appealing & comfortable.
17. The garden space has been assessed for safety, including child-safe pest control and tools, no vagrancy (ex. fencing prevents strangers from entering), and low risk of falling/slipping.	The garden has <i>not</i> yet been assessed for the physical safety of all users.	The garden space has been deemed generally safe. <i>More work</i> would further enhance safety.	The garden is <i>regularly</i> assessed for safety and is currently <i>deemed safe for all</i> users.
18. Crops are harvested for specific uses (ex., tasting, selling, making art, serving, food pantries).	There are <i>no</i> planned uses for the crops grown.	<i>Some</i> crops are grown with specific uses in mind.	<i>All</i> crops are grown with specific uses in mind.
19. Crops are grown in accordance with Arizona's food safety guidelines for any foods tasted or consumed. <i>Note: Click the Arizona Department of Health Services link to learn more.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> N/A.	There is <i>no</i> current garden food safety plan (see link). Check N/A if crops are not tasted/consumed.	A garden food safety plan (see link) is <i>being developed</i> . Check N/A if crops are not tasted/consumed.	A garden food safety plan and certification are <i>currently in place</i> (see link). Check N/A if crops are not tasted/consumed.

 **ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES:** Any ways in which the conditions surrounding the garden change. Planned changes are those that school garden leaders anticipate, like teacher interest in adding beds for more classrooms. Unplanned changes are those that cannot be anticipated, like the invasion of a new weed or insect.



STUDENT EXPERIENCE ITEMS

0 – Not in Place

1 – Partly in Place

2 – Fully in Place

1. Students are actively involved in garden planning and/or management (ex., what is grown, composting).	Students currently play <i>no</i> role in garden planning or management decisions.	At least some students <i>sometimes</i> engage in garden planning and/or management.	At least some students are <i>regularly</i> engaged in garden planning and/or management.
2. Students help create and/or maintain some aspect of the PHYSICAL garden (ex., designing an eco-friendly garden, building beds, doing chores like watering or weeding) on a regular basis	Students currently play <i>no</i> role in creating or maintaining the physical garden.	At least some students <i>sometimes</i> help to create and/or maintain the physical garden.	At least some students <i>usually</i> or <i>always</i> help to create and/or maintain the physical garden.
3. All students receive or will receive garden-related EDUCATION (i.e., lessons) sometime this school year.	<i>No</i> students currently receive garden-related education/formal lessons.	<i>Some</i> students or grades receive/will be taught gardening lessons this year.	<i>All</i> students in all grades receive/will be taught gardening lessons this year.
4. Student gardening activities are developmentally appropriate (ex., for different ages, for those with individualized education plans, or IEPs). <i>Note: Ask someone familiar with this.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>N/A (no current activities).</i>	Current garden activities are <i>not</i> intentionally made to be developmentally appropriate (ex., they are opportunistic).	<i>Some (or at least one)</i> of the garden activities currently carried out have been designed to be developmentally appropriate.	<i>Most or all</i> of the garden activities currently carried out have been designed to be developmentally appropriate.
5. Gardening activities often engage students in the FULL life cycle of a crop: prep, plant, grow, harvest.	<i>No</i> current garden activities let students follow the FULL cycle.	Garden activities <i>sometimes</i> let students follow the FULL cycle.	Garden activities <i>usually</i> or <i>always</i> let students follow the FULL cycle.
6. Some regular gardening activities (ex., the curriculum, tasting events) include learning about NUTRITION.	<i>No</i> current gardening activities address nutrition topics.	<i>At least one</i> current gardening activity addresses nutrition topics.	<i>At least some</i> recurring gardening activities address nutrition topics.
7. Some regular gardening activities (ex., lessons, building, harvesting) encourage students to BE ACTIVE.	Garden activities <i>do not</i> currently encourage physical activity among students.	Garden activities <i>occasionally</i> encourage students to be physically active.	Garden activities <i>usually</i> or <i>regularly</i> encourage students to be physically active.
8. Most or all gardening activities with students promote TOTAL WELLBEING (ex., by encouraging students to spend time outdoors, practice sensory awareness, connect with nature and/or other people, etc.) 	<i>None</i> of the current gardening activities with students are expressly designed to promote their total wellbeing.	<i>Some (or at least one)</i> of the current gardening activities with students are designed to promote their total wellbeing.	<i>Most or all</i> of the current gardening activities with students are designed to promote their total wellbeing in some way.
9. Students often spend time in the garden outside of structured lessons.	<i>Few or no</i> students spend unstructured time in the garden at this time.	<i>At least some</i> students spend unstructured time in the garden <i>sometimes</i> .	<i>Many</i> students spend unstructured time in the garden <i>on a regular basis</i> .
10. Gardening activities with students often build from their prior grade level activities.	Gardening activities <i>do not</i> currently build from any prior grade level activities.	Gardening activities <i>occasionally</i> build from students' prior grade level activities.	Gardening activities <i>regularly</i> build from students' prior grade level activities.

TOTAL WELLBEING: The overall combination of physical, mental, emotional, and social health, or overall wellness. Activities that promote students' total wellbeing have been designed to address more than one aspect of their wellbeing, for example, intellectual growth through learning, physical health by being active, emotional health by taking a break from the classroom, and social health by connecting with others in meaningful ways.





CULTURE & COMMUNITY ITEMS

0 – Not in Place

1 – Partly in Place

2 – Fully in Place

1. People from diverse groups like these participate in ongoing school garden activities: Classroom teachers & specialists, school maintenance/facilities staff, school or district administrators, other school staff, families of students, local volunteers, community partners.	<i>Only one</i> of the groups listed participates in the school garden program.	<i>Some</i> of the groups listed participate in the school garden program. As the user, <i>you decide</i> if “some” means 2 or more or something else.	<i>Many</i> of the groups listed participate in the school garden program. As the user, <i>you decide</i> if “many” means 3 or more or something else.
2. The school garden program coordinates its efforts with other school priorities (ex., facilities plans, contracted pest or weed management, other administrator priorities). <input type="checkbox"/> N/A.	School garden efforts are <i>not</i> currently coordinated with other priorities. Check N/A if there is no need (ex., no potential for conflicting interests).	School garden efforts are <i>sometimes</i> coordinated with other priorities. Check N/A if there is no need (ex., no potential for conflicting interests).	School garden efforts are <i>often or always</i> coordinated with other priorities. Check N/A if there is no need (ex., no potential for conflicting interests).
3. Garden-related activities with the broader school community occur at least annually (ex., community engagement days, building or planting days, harvest festivals, planning sessions).	As of now, <i>no</i> garden activities with the broader school community are planned this year.	<i>At least one</i> garden activity with the broader school community is planned this year.	Garden activities with the broader school community take place <i>throughout the year</i> (ex., semi-annually or more).
4. The school uses effective communication methods (ex., newsletters, email, social media, conferences, multi-language) to invite school community members to gardening activities and/or events.	The school does <i>not</i> currently communicate to the broader community about its garden-related activities.	The school uses <i>at least one</i> method to communicate about its garden-related activities, or it <i>sometimes</i> communicates activities.	The school uses <i>more than one</i> method to communicate <i>regularly</i> with the broader community about its garden-related activities.
5. Gardening is a part of the school's IDENTITY/ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE . 	In general, school community members do <i>not</i> consider gardening to be an integral part of the school's identity.	<i>A few</i> school community members consider gardening important to the school's identity/organizational culture.	<i>Many or most</i> school community members consider gardening integral to the school identity, i.e. gardening is part of the organizational culture.
6. The school garden program ENGAGES WITH THE COMMUNITY TO LEARN about gardening practices that reflect LOCAL CULTURE (ex., learning about traditional vegetables that families serve, asking a local grower about native plants or using ollas for irrigation). <i>Note: Click the link to learn more about local culture, which can include the traditions, knowledge, practices, and/or preferences of the local community.</i> 	No one involved in the school garden currently asks (talks to) the broader local community about their gardening practices.	At least one person currently involved in the school garden has asked/asks (talks to) the broader local community about their gardening practices, <i>at least once</i> .	At least one person currently involved in the school garden <i>regularly</i> asks (talks to) the broader local community about their gardening practices.
7. At least some garden activities ACTUALLY INTEGRATE local cultural practices and/or preferences . <i>Note: Click the link for examples of local culture.</i>	<i>No</i> current garden activities incorporate the practices or preferences of the local community.	<i>At least one</i> current garden activity incorporates the practices or preferences of the local community.	<i>At least some</i> current garden activities incorporate the practices or preferences of the local community.
8. Beyond teacher–student activities, at least some garden activities connect different groups of people to each other (ex., teachers with families, younger with older students, school staff with elders).	<i>No</i> current garden activities connect 2 or more different groups of people to each other.	<i>At least one</i> current garden activity connects 2 or more different groups of people to each other.	<i>At least some</i> current garden activities connects 2 or more different groups of people to each other.

IDENTITY/ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: Though there can be different definitions, users can generally think of the school's identity or organizational culture as the shared beliefs, values, norms, and practices that shape how the school operates. For example, employees and leaders who see gardening as a part of the school's identity will tend to value gardening, prioritize gardening activities, and talk regularly about the school garden program.



LOCAL CULTURE: Users can generally think of culture as the shared ideas, traditions, values, knowledge, and experiences of the local community in which the school resides. For gardening, it can include the shared values and practices of families in the local community (with and without students in the school) around growing and serving foods. Click the link to learn more.



School:

Your Name:

Today's Date: / /

☐ Check if this is the school's **first time** using tool.

The DIG in Schools tool is designed to help schools grow and sustain their garden programs. Each of the 50 items is an idea for how to integrate the garden more fully into the school community. Schools can use the tool to **rate their current garden program**, **select items to work on**, and **track growth over time**.

- Some items are low-cost and easy to do, while other ideas can involve more time and resources.
- Not all items are appropriate for all schools. Schools can choose ideas that work well for their unique setting.
- Gardens change over time. The tool should give you a sense of **how the current garden program functions**.

INSTRUCTIONS

- DETERMINE WHO HAS THE INFORMATION YOU NEED TO COMPLETE THIS TOOL. **Decide how you will complete the tool** (ex., as a group, with students, etc.), and schedule a time to connect with the right people!
- RATE EACH ITEM. Is it **Not in Place Right Now (0)**, **Partly in Place Right Now (1)**, or **Fully in Place Right Now (2)**? Some items may be N/A. It's okay to use your intuition. Need help? Use the Dig in Schools Rating Guide. And **take notes** about your ratings!
- ADD UP YOUR RATINGS. If more than one person completed the tool, **come to consensus by talking**. Then tally the section and total scores! How integrated is your school garden program?
- DISCUSS THE TOOL RESULTS WITH YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY. What are your program's strengths? Where would you most like to grow your program? **Decide which items your school will address**. The DIG in Schools action plan template can help!

QUESTIONS TO GET STARTED

Answer these questions first to guide how you complete the DIG in Schools tool. Groups should come to a consensus.

- Which of the below best describes your school garden program **at this point in time**?
 - Our garden program is **just getting started**. **Hot Tip: Focus on JUST the priority items with ! icons.**
 - Our garden program has been around for a while, **operating pretty consistently over time**.
 - Our garden program has been around for a while and is **now expanding**.
 - Our garden program has been around for a while, but it is **currently not very active** or dormant.
 - Our garden program is **currently being revitalized** after a dormant period.
- Who is completing the DIG in Schools tool? Why?
- For groups, how will you finalize your results? Will one person or the group make the final decisions? Why?

When you rate items, remember to **answer based on where your garden program is RIGHT NOW**, not where you would like the garden to be or where it has been.

0 - Not in Place or Generally Not Done, 1 - Partly in Place or Sometimes Done, 2 - Fully in Place or Usually Done



RESOURCES & SUPPORT

Rating
0, 1, or 2

- ! 1. The school has at least one very active garden person, like a garden champion or designated leader.....
2. New garden leaders or champions (paid or volunteer) are regularly identified to ensure continuity.....
3. A school or district group of at least 3 people meets regularly to discuss the garden program.....
4. The school is CURRENTLY connected to at least one garden support system (ex., Farm to School Network) that offers opportunities to network with others, access resources, and/or learn.....
5. The school is CURRENTLY connected to at least one local organization or person (ex., AZ Health Zone, AmeriCorps, Master Gardeners) for technical assistance with the school's garden program. ☐ N/A.....
- ! 6. The school has adequate information about how to fund garden program activities.....
7. The school has adequate funding for this year's planned garden program activities.....
- ! 8. The school administration (ex., Principal) provides staff with DEDICATED TIME for planning, implementing, and/or evaluating the school garden program (ex., building or tending the garden, teaching lessons).....
9. Teachers and/or other staff receive gardening education and training (ex., core curricula, how to's).....
10. The school has enough supplies for all students in the garden AT THE SAME TIME to participate.....
11. The school administration actively promotes the school's garden program (ex., in newsletters or talks)....
12. The Local Wellness Policy states that schools have a garden program. (Note: check the district or school Local Wellness Policy.).....
- ! 13. The school has a GARDEN PROGRAM GUIDE IN HARDCOPY AND/OR ELECTRONIC FORM that includes: [Check all that apply and follow scoring instructions in the box.].....
 - ☐ The garden program's vision & goals
 - ☐ A budget plan for obtaining funding & supplies
 - ☐ The garden's design/layout
 - ☐ The intended use(s) for the garden
 - ☐ A written garden maintenance plan
 - ☐ A written plan for integrating the garden into the student experience (ex., curricula, growing)
 - ☐ A written plan for integrating the garden into the broader school community (ex., harvest events)
 - ☐ A written succession plan to address turnover or handoffs of garden-related staff

HOW TO SCORE ITEM #13

0 - No hardcopy or electronic guide

1 - Guide has 1-4 components

2 - Guide has 5 or more components

Resources & Support Subtotal

(add up all 1s and 2s)

NOTES (why you rated this way, more information, ideas)



THE GARDEN

Rating

0, 1, or 2

- ! 1. The school has at least one type of garden (ex., raised bed, in ground, hydroponic, pollinator).....
- ! 2. The school has all of the tools and materials needed to build and/or maintain the garden (ex., lumber, soil, shade cloth, shovels, hoses, any needed power supply, water source).....
- ! 3. The school has a suitable garden space for all intended use(s), like growing and teaching.....
- ! 4. The garden area has enough natural (or artificial) lighting and shade for the intended use(s).....
- ! 5. The watering system is suitable for the garden type, school maintenance capacity, and school goals.....
- ! 6. The garden has sufficient drainage. ☐ N/A (ex., hydroponic or flood crop).....
7. The watering system is checked regularly by a designated person or group.....
8. The watering system addresses water scarcity in dry climates like the desert (ex., using rainwater harvesting or hydroponics). ☐ N/A (not a dry/arid climate).....
9. The soil (or water, if hydroponic) receives nutrients/soil amendments, as needed.....
10. Pest management (ex., fencing, safe spraying) reduces the impact of insects, rodents, etc. ☐ N/A.....
11. The garden is modified, as needed, in response to planned and unplanned environmental changes (ex., weather, new pests, school interest in new uses).....
12. The garden has sufficient, easy-to-access storage for tools, seeds, and other supplies.....
13. Everyone responsible for the garden has full access to it (ex., has gate or shed keys).....
14. When active, the garden is regularly tended (ex., watered, checked for pests) by a DESIGNATED person or group. *Note: Many gardens are seasonally dormant. Answer for active seasons, only.*.....
15. The garden is accessible to adults and students with physical mobility impairments (ex., people using wheelchairs can access and participate in the garden similar to other people.).....
16. The garden space is inviting and comfortable (ex., painted signs, shaded benches, work tables).....
- ! 17. The garden space has been assessed for safety, including child-safe pest control and tools, no vagrancy (ex. fencing prevents strangers from entering), and low risk of falling/slipping.....
18. Crops are harvested for specific uses (ex., tasting, selling, making art, serving, food pantries).....
19. Crops are grown in accordance with Arizona's [food safety guidelines](#) for any foods tasted or consumed. *Note: Click the Arizona Department of Health Services link to learn more.* ☐ N/A.....

The Garden Subtotal

(add up all 1s and 2s)

NOTES (why you rated this way, more information, ideas)



STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Rating

0, 1, or 2

1. Students are actively involved in garden planning and/or management (ex., what is grown, composting).....
- ! 2. Students help create and/or maintain some aspect of the PHYSICAL garden (ex., designing an eco-friendly garden, building beds, doing chores like watering or weeding) on a regular basis.....
3. All students receive or will receive garden-related EDUCATION (i.e., lessons) sometime this school year.....
4. Student gardening activities are developmentally appropriate (ex., for different ages, for those with individualized education plans). *Note: Ask someone familiar with this.* ☐ N/A (no current activities).....
5. Gardening activities often engage students in the FULL life cycle of a crop: prep, plant, grow, harvest.....
6. Some regular gardening activities (ex., the curriculum, tasting events) include learning about NUTRITION....
7. Some regular gardening activities (ex., lessons, building, harvesting) encourage students to BE ACTIVE.....
8. Most or all gardening activities with students promote TOTAL WELLBEING (ex., by encouraging students to spend time outdoors, practice sensory awareness, connect with nature and/or other people, etc.).....
9. Students often spend time in the garden outside of structured lessons.....
10. Gardening activities with students often build from their prior grade level activities.....

Student Experience Subtotal

(add up all 1s and 2s)



CULTURE & COMMUNITY

Rating

0, 1, or 2

- ! 1. People from diverse groups like these participate in ongoing school garden activities:.....
 - Classroom teachers & specialists (ex., PE teacher, nurse)
 - School maintenance/facilities staff
 - School or district administrators
 - Other school staff (ex., front desk, bus drivers)
 - Families of students
 - Local volunteers (ex., local gardeners, elders, church groups)
 - Community partners (ex., tribal organizations, the AZ Health Zone, local businesses, AmeriCorps)
2. The school garden program coordinates its efforts with other school priorities (ex., facilities plans, contracted pest or weed management, other administrator priorities). ☐ N/A.....
3. Garden-related activities with the broader school community occur at least annually (ex., community engagement days, building or planting days, harvest festivals, planning sessions).....
4. The school uses effective communication methods (ex., newsletters, email, social media, conferences, multi-language) to invite school community members to gardening activities and/or events.....
5. Gardening is a part of the school's identity/organizational culture.....
6. The school garden program ENGAGES WITH THE COMMUNITY TO LEARN about gardening practices that reflect local culture (ex., learning about traditional vegetables that families serve, asking a local grower about native plants or using ollas for irrigation). *Note: Click the link to learn more about local culture, which can include the traditions, knowledge, practices, and/or preferences of the local community*.....
7. At least some garden activities ACTUALLY INTEGRATE local cultural practices and/or preferences. *Note: Click the link for examples of local culture*.....
8. Beyond teacher-student activities, at least some garden activities connect different groups of people to each other (ex., teachers with families, younger with older students, school staff with elders).....

HOW TO SCORE ITEM #1

0 - Only one of these groups is involved

1 - Some of these groups are involved

2 - Many of these groups are involved

Culture & Community Subtotal

(add up all 1s and 2s)

NOTES (why you rated this way, more information, ideas)

SECTION & OVERALL TOTALS

RESOURCES & SUPPORT

of 26 =

%

THE GARDEN

of 38 =

%

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

of 20 =

%

CULTURE & COMMUNITY

of 16 =

%

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Which sections stand out to you as already thriving?

Which sections are you interested in developing more?

Add up the sections → TOTAL

of 100*

*Not Applicable (N/A) items make total possible points lower and total % scores higher. For the purposes of using the DIG in Schools tool, you do not need to worry about adjusting your points! This tool and the points are simply a broad guide to help you explore sections that you feel are already strong and sections where you feel you may want to focus your efforts! The total and the scale below can also help you to better understand your school garden's current level of integration.

HOW INTEGRATED IS YOUR SCHOOL GARDEN?

Note: These broad ranges for levels of integration naturally account for N/A items.



0-33

SPROUTING

Your garden is getting started! How can you use these results to progress?



34-66

GROWING

Your garden is moderately integrated already! How can you build on these strengths?



67-100

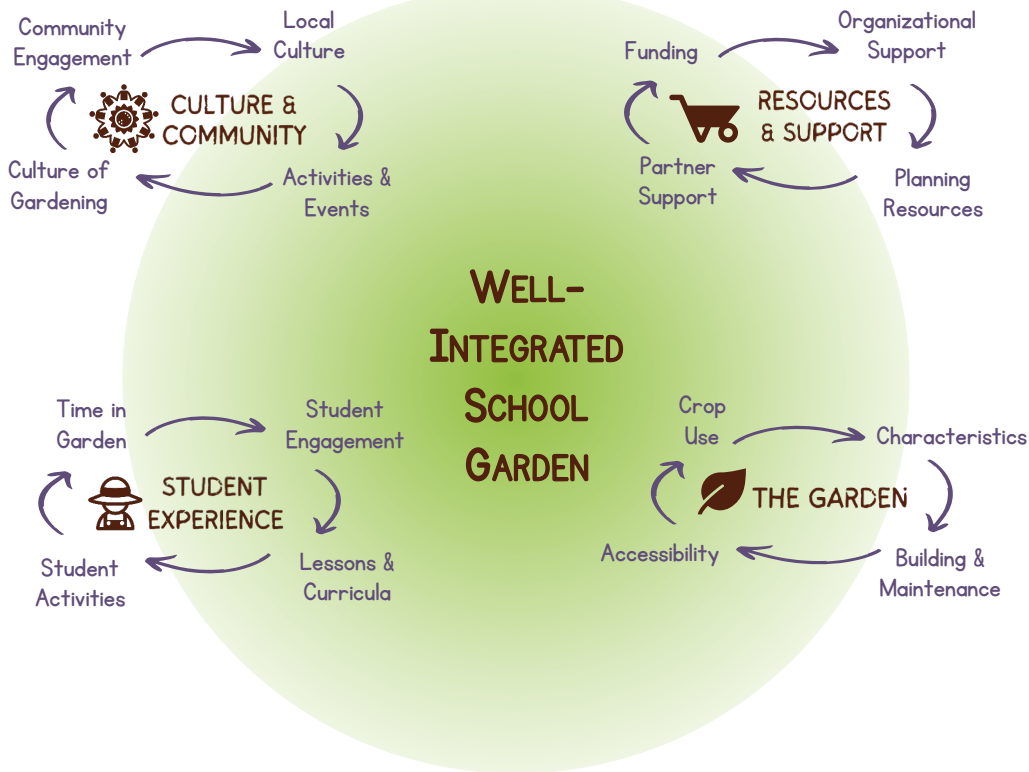
THRIVING

Your garden is well-integrated! Use these results to celebrate and keep flourishing!

WHAT IS A WELL-INTEGRATED SCHOOL GARDEN?

A well-integrated school garden ([Burt et al., 2017](#)): “is maintained...at or near a school, is primarily used as a learning environment to create meaningful experiences for students, is a valued part of the school’s culture, and is sustained over time.”

HOW DO THE DIG IN SCHOOLS TOOL SECTIONS WORK TOGETHER FOR AN INTEGRATED GARDEN?



WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR DEVELOPING **YOUR** INTEGRATED SCHOOL GARDEN PROGRAM?

Are there certain DIG in Schools items or sections that are especially important to members of your school community? Are there other things you would like to pursue that are not covered in this tool?