

Presentation - Elle Spier, GardenQ LLC, Childs Elementary PTO Sustainability Chair

From Bloomington originally, and returned to Bloomington with children now at Childs Elementary. My kids noted the wastefulness at their school, specifically with food and other waste in the cafeteria. As a result the suggested a waste audit at their school and piloted a composting program. We were able to find grants and volunteers to conduct this audit and implement the pilot program. Over the past year and a half, we have tweaked the composting process, and see how best to engage the students appropriately. The school has now taken up the program themselves. In order to make these changes more official, rather than just a group of renegade parents, we started a sustainability committee to conduct these improvements. However the programs still depended on the parents acquiring the funding themselves either through fundraising or grants. From this pilot project, we discovered a drainage issue at the school, resulting in pooling water. This led to installation of a rain garden to address the problem, this project still required parents finding funds. We partnered with the sycamore knolls neighborhood association and utilized grant money from HAND to construct this rain garden. However, discovered that this project was going to cost a significant amount more than the grant. We had over 20 different community partners, who were able to donate equipment and expertise. Students were involved in some aspects of the process, such as planting and mulching, to educate them on the project. The Girl Scout troop at Childs conducted research to create educational signs for the rain garden. This rain garden will be open to the community. In planning this project, we talked with previous installers of rain gardens to figure out what has worked and not worked, such as making paths between planting rows wide enough for movement of wheelbarrows during maintenance. Now we are currently putting together a maintenance plan so that this project can be owned and managed by the school after my own children leave. In terms of the compost project, we are utilizing food from the cafeteria, however this has been a bit limited due to using a worm based system and the lack of a hands-on manager employed by the school. We did a pilot harvest for the vegetable garden to the students teach how to use these gardens to cook and try and incorporate it into the classroom curriculum. Right now we are looking to expand this program to other organization until MCCSC wants to run the program. The Boys and Girls Club Crestmont is interested. Looking for community partners, in the form of volunteers, or building connections with qualified individuals.