

Second Schoolyard Garden Conference heralds a better future for children

April, 2014 – Bloomington – Cultivating a healthy future for our children was at the heart of The Schoolyard Garden Conference held recently. Those attending learned how a schoolyard-garden-centered curriculum can teach children about healthy eating and support whole-child development. They included principals, teachers and food service staff from Bloomington, Edina and Richfield school districts. Education Commissioner, Dr. Brenda Cassellius, and Agriculture Commissioner, Dave Frederickson, were also there.



South Education Center staff members who presented at the second, Annual Schoolyard Garden Conference held at the Minnesota Arboretum.

Healthy vegetables are there for the tasting

SHIP (Statewide Health Improvement Program) has supported schoolyard gardens as a way to help children eat more vegetables.* Many children are from families that have a hard time buying fresh fruits and vegetables. Growing vegetables where students are reduces this barrier to healthy eating by giving children a chance to experience these foods. Teachers have testified that children are more receptive to tasting vegetables when they interact with the garden.

* Only 19 percent of children age 3-17 in Hennepin County eat at least three servings of vegetables in a day. (Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department. SHAPE 2010 – Child Survey Data Book, Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 2011.)

Supporting schoolyard gardens contributes to long-lasting benefits

Interest and attendance at this second annual schoolyard garden conference speaks to long-lasting change that is at SHIP's core. Participation increased by 60% compared to last year.

This year, South Education Center (SEC) staff, representing Bloomington, Edina and Richfield, presented at the conference.

SEC Instructor and Garden Program Coordinator, Brian Wheat, said about the upcoming growing season, "We are including food that can be integrated into our school lunches. With the purpose of increasing Social Emotional Learning opportunities, experiential learning, and building community, we are also moving to conduct many more classes in the garden space when the weather permits."

SHIP is continuing to support schoolyard garden curriculum development and participation in the Schoolyard Garden Coalition and Conferences. It's all part of helping to make a better future for our children.