

## Edible gardens take root at city schools

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NEW BEDFORD — Students at three city elementary schools will have the chance to dig deeper next year, as plans to grow on-site gardens filled with corn, kale and pumpkins take root.

Two new edible gardens are planned for the Brooks and Hannigan schools next year, part of a pilot program designed to bring the earthy, hands-on learning long available at Hayden-McFadden to more schools in the district.

"The goal for us is five years down the line that every public school yard has a ... garden in some capacity," said Zoe Hansen-DiBello, the coordinator of the Marion Institute's Grow Education initiative, which will lead a retreat for teachers from the two schools this summer and host workshops during the year.

The gardens provide a way to teach students about healthy eating and responsibility, and they mesh with other, more traditional curricula in math, science and even language arts requirements, said Beth Andrews, a special-needs teacher at Hayden-McFadden, which this year incorporated the garden into work for all grades, expanding its role from an extra-curricular club.

"It's changing a lifestyle, it's helping children see something they're good at, having confidence in themselves, creating healthier lives," said Andrews.

Hannigan Principal Susan Campinha-Beck said she is hoping the garden — and the food it produces — will engage families and strengthen the school's role as a community center.

"I really see it as an opportunity for me to open the doors here and say, 'Come on in, families,'" Campinha-Beck said. "This is an opportunity to have a structured place for parents to use their skills, their knowledge, in a way that's collaborative."

Many of the city's schools already have greenhouses or gardens that have fallen into disuse, making the district a good fit for an urban gardening program, Hansen-DiBello said.

"I just think kids learn better when it's hands-on," she said. "It's not rocket science."