

COMMUNITY DINNERS

Grow Education has been hosting inclusive well attended community dinners at schools for the past 6 years as a way to engage families and school neighbors in the planning process for a school garden.

Dinner Goals

- To get to know the school community in a meaningful way- over food!
- Create a list of fruits, vegetables and herbs the community would like to grow and eat
- Gain an understanding of the cultures in the room and how programming or curriculum might incorporate cultural traditions or knowledge
- Set expectations of what the coming months of engagement look like around the garden for families

Tips for a successful and inclusive dinner:

- Know your audience. What neighborhood are you in? Do any of your families work or own a local restaurant? Food is a great way to bring people together, but it's an even better tool if it culturally represents the people in attendance. This will immediately create a welcoming feel for families, and earn the staff at the school some cool points :) Not to mention you would be supporting local businesses.
- Timing is key. It might be helpful to survey some students and their families to see when the best time to gather is for working families. Some people have multiple jobs or work second shift, so always best to ask.
- Make sure communication is accessible. Always make sure you are providing material in multiple languages (whichever are dominate in your community) and if possible have school office manager call the families and leave a message in multiple languages, this takes care of those who might not be literate. Doing an "all-call" is best to do a few days before and the day of as a friendly reminder.
- Keep it simple, your main objective is the building of relationships. Smile, engage and listen. People will walk away remembering how you made them feel, not necessarily what you said. This dinner is the beginning of year long (maybe multi year long) relationships.