



Growing the Future: Report of a conference held on 19 April 2010 at the National Botanic Garden of Wales

Growing the Future is an informal network of education providers, food and farming organizations and others which is developing the agenda for education about food production in schools. It has organized a series of national conferences from 2005 onwards and is engaged in a formal process with the Welsh Assembly Government departments of Education, Rural Affairs, Environment and Health, coordinated by the champion for Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship. For more information please contact Jane Powell, jnp@aber.ac.uk, at Organic Centre Wales.

In April 2010 the National Botanic Garden of Wales, the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens and Organic Centre Wales/FACE held a conference for teachers and agencies working with schools. The purpose of the conference was to consult them about their needs, obstacles they had identified, and their vision for the future. The results from the workshop session are summarized below.

1. What works well in schools?

Activities

- **Gardening and school grounds:** small enclosures e.g. raised beds, potatoes in tyres; growing food on allotments; eating the produce in kitchens; hatching eggs in incubators; chickens, quails, ducks, goats; sensory garden (flowers, veg, herbs); include biodiversity; outdoor classroom/calm area for pupils and staff.
- **Farm visits:** inspiring, and make the link between food and producer.
- **Enterprise:** Food Coops, involving community, staff and pupils; farmers' markets in the school grounds; selling produce at the summer fair; growing Christmas trees for sale to fund garden; supermarket visits.
- **School food:** links to public procurement, e.g. organic/local food in school meals; demonstration local food meals; fruit from local greengrocers at break times .
- **Cookery:** Cook-it clubs, start them young; demonstrations using local seasonal produce; Healthy Eating day with cookery.
- **General outdoor education:** nature walks, organized field work visits using sensory experience; hands-on skills, e.g. working with animals; traditional skills; construction of a walled garden using pupils doing vocational qualifications.

Learning and involvement

- **School Nutrition Action Groups** (BOBS – Bwyd o Bwys) and **school councils** can advise on school menus and other areas
- Allow children to develop **ownership of school grounds** and projects, and involve them in planning and execution of projects, develop leadership skills;
- Pupils get a sense of achievement from **completing tasks** such as planting trees, building nest boxes;
- Learners **take responsibility** for recycling, saving energy and so on.

- **OCN accreditation** for secondary school pupils (gardening, nutrition)
- Making food education relate to **everyday lives**.
- **Traditional skills** in the outdoor classroom work well for alternative curriculum students.
- **Complex issues** such as food miles are subjects for debate in classroom
- **Careers advice** includes land-based industries

Whole school

- Cross curricular **thematic approach** to food, exploiting possibilities of the new curriculum: (Foundation Phase, Key Stage Two, the skills emphasis).
- **Dedicated curriculum time** for food education, not a 'bolt-on'
- **Enrichment Sessions** – 6 weeks each term with vertical groupings of pupils and involving grandparents and parents, teaching assistants and teachers, looking at organic gardening and healthy eating.
- **Training for teachers** e.g. nutrition, leadership skills, gardening
- **Teacher placements**, e.g. in local hotel to learn catering.
- **Training for cooks** and other support staff, e.g. in nutrition and food production

School and community

- **Healthy Schools Scheme** and **Eco Schools** are key agencies;
- **partnerships with other agencies** e.g. Forestry Commission, NBGW, National Trust, Women's Institute, National Parks and others who can supply advice, materials and sometimes funding;
- Participation in **conferences**, e.g. Fair Trade;
- **family involvement** in gardening;
- links to **farms**;
- locally sourced **school meals** to which farmers, parents and community leaders invited.
- Sponsorship from **local businesses**
- Visits to **food festivals**

2. Barriers and solutions

Barrier	Possible solution
Activities: Gardens and school grounds	
Grounds maintenance contracts do not always provide well for school gardens	School maintenance crews to be involved in gardens and growing
vandalism	Use materials difficult to vandalize; CCTV; PCSO involvement; anti-vandal paint; immediate repair of damage
Lack of knowledge and confidence	Use local networks: PTA, local gardening club, local shows, retired people, WI, local farmers
	Training for teachers; accredited CPD; include food in initial teacher training
Lack of funding	Princes' Trust initiatives (esp. for allotment development); police have funding for community support; local trusts; ESF; BBC – Dig it; B&Q; Grow your own Potatoes; PTA fundraisers; have a central register of grants; social enterprises
Bad weather	Stocks of wet weather clothing, tarpaulins, umbrellas
Uncertainties about health and safety legislation	Get clarification, go on training courses

Activities: Farm visits	
Hard to find a farm	FACE Cymru website
<i>E. coli</i> scare stories	Get positive stories in the press; school nurses to teach hand-washing and link to farm visits; visit CEVAS-trained farms
Cost to parents of school trips	fundraising

Whole school	
Lack of time for food education	Dedicated time within the curriculum for food/rural studies
	Integrate gardens with the curriculum (e.g. teach maths and science through gardening); make the most of the skills-based curriculum
Loss of momentum in Yr 7 and 8	Scope in new Yr 7 way of teaching
Lack of communication between school and local authority catering division	A management challenge: head teacher to run school canteen in tandem with school council
Difficulties of sourcing local food: suppliers unwilling to change, health and safety fears, lack of SMT engagement; food distribution system; conflicting aims of profit and healthy eating	Empower schools to opt out and do their own local food sourcing?
Hard to release teachers for training	Schools organize joint INSET days to share costs; also train caretakers and support staff
Teachers who aren't interested; high dependency on a few teachers who are – and what happens when they leave?	Strong leadership from head teacher; parental involvement
Lack of communication within and between schools	Set up networks for teachers and technicians, within and between schools and other agencies
Lack of cohesion at the top	Head teachers to engage with agenda and have designated coordinators
Pressure on school to perform in other areas competes with food agenda	Change values of schools
Confused information from different sources	Directory of food and farming providers; partnerships with various agencies e.g. National Trust, Botanic Garden and many others; specific partnerships such as Bridgend Education for Environmental Sustainability
Ignorance about sustainability, health and safety	High quality training
Resistance to team working	Training on need for partnership working

3. A wish list

Activities: resources and facilities

- Bilingual resources
- List of organisations from where funding can be obtained
- Useful and practical case studies to inspire people!
- A Victorian Walled garden with a nice greenhouse (heated)
- Purpose built kitchens for learners in all schools

- Transport for schools to get out of the classroom and see plants and animals, etc
- Adopt a farm: Community Supported Agriculture for schools

Learning and involvement

- A food curriculum providing continuity from primary to secondary, with an imaginative approach for Year 7
- Rural studies and cookery on the curriculum
- Schools to study land use and sustainability of food production
- Food education a priority – Every pupil to have hands on experience of cooking, growing and farm links and opportunity to develop these skills to vocational level if required - involve caterers, school staff and wider community.
- Growing the Future activities to be available to all children, not just special needs or excluded pupils

Whole school

- Engagement with catering units in LA's
- More funding for partnership projects between schools and third sector for projects that meet the curricular needs
- Schools have access to locally produced food
- Key person there to motivate the staff: if you lose your key person who is the successor?

Conclusions

Some general themes emerge from the lists above. These are:

1. Education about the food chain from field to fork provides excellent opportunities for pupil engagement, providing a bridge between academic subjects and everyday life, a range of learning environments outside the classroom, an opportunity to connect to the world outside the school and practice in taking ownership of projects and working in teams. It also equips pupils with essential knowledge about food which will be important to them in planning a healthy and sustainable future.
2. Teachers need access to training, information and funding in order to develop their activities. Provision of these is patchy around Wales, with some excellent examples but many gaps.
3. Food education needs whole school support if all the benefits are to be realized. This means a change in school culture in many cases, so that everything does not fall on one enthusiastic teacher, and so that consistent messages are given. For instance, the food served in the school canteen should mirror the values of animal welfare and friendliness to wildlife that pupils are taught in the school garden.

Jane Richmond, National Botanic Garden of Wales
 Katie Jones, Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens
 Jane Powell, Organic Centre Wales and FACE Cymru

On behalf of the Growing the Future partnership.

Delegates at the conference who contributed to the workshop are listed below.

Delegate List

David Davies	Assistant Faculty Manager	Coleg Sir Gâr
Maurice Pirotte	Appetite for Life Development Worker	Torfaen
Helen Watkins	Appetite for Life Development Worker	Torfaen
Toni Edwards	Catering/Cleaning Manager	Torfaen
Colette Bond	Head of Education/Food for Life Partnership	Coventry
Ann-Marie Kenward	Teacher Sir Thomas Picton Secondary School	Pembs
Vicky Stevens	Technician Sir Thomas Picton Secondary School	Pembs
Dorian Williams	Head Teacher Bro Myrddin Secondary School	Carms
Alun Davies	Teacher Bro Myrddin Secondary School	Carms
Anita Daimond	ESDGC Schools Networks	Bangor
Carole Gledhill	Education Consultant Careers Wales MGP	Powis
Louise Morgan	Teacher Cross Hands Primary School	Carms
Daren Webb	Teacher Nantyglo Comprehensive School	Blaenau Gwent
Stephanie Werrett	Teacher Nantyglo Comprehensive School	Blaenau Gwent
Wendy Ostler	Healthy Schools Co-ordinator	Conwy
Anita Houten	School Officer Environment Centre	Swansea
Anita Schwartz	Education Officer, CAT	Machynlleth
Richard Lewis	Horticultural Lecturer	Flint
Gerald Miles	Organic Farmer	
Giovanna De la Puente	Growing Wales	
Scott Sinclair	ESDGC Schools Networks	Pembs
Mrs M Powell	Deputy Head Teacher Corneli Primary School	Bridgend
Mr J Smith	Teacher Knelston Primary School	Swansea
Elaine Pugh	Teacher Brynhyfryd Infant School	Swansea
Kathryn Richards	Head Teacher Brynhyfryd Infant School	Swansea
Caroline Dawson	Food Officer	Wrexham
Lucinda Hall	Education Officer National Park Gallery	Pembs
Margaret Bowen	Teacher Ysgol Y Ddwylan Primary School	Carms
Sue Potenta	Food Technology Teacher Penybryn Senior Special School	Swansea
Eira Edwards	Our Welsh Farm	Bridgend
Clare Revera	Out to Learn	Bridgend
Nina Brocklebank	Team Leader Coedffranc Primary School	Neath
Mrs T Bennett	Senior Teacher Old Castle Primary School	Bridgend
Mrs C Littlewood	Healthy Schools Co-ordinator SENCO	Bridgend
Verity Jones	Teacher Llangewydd Junior School	Bridgend
Charlotte Jury	Admin/Eco/Forest Schools Llangewydd Jr Sch	Bridgend
John Gibson	Facilities Manager Bryncelynnog Comprehensive	Pontypridd
Sue Johnson	Supervisor Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School	Pontypridd
Philip Williams	Head Teacher Pontybrenin Primary School	Swansea

Amanda Davies	Teacher Pontybrenin Primary School	Swansea
Natalie Waller	Biodiversity in Schools Officer	Newport
Amy Jones	Healthy Schools Scheme	Ceredigion
Alison Jones	Public Health Dietician	Pembs
Helen Bradley	ESDGC Schools Network	
Gill Jones	Director of Enterprise UWIC	Cardiff
Jane Powell	FACE Cymru	
Katie Jones	Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens	Cardiff
Jill Simpson	FACE Cymru	
Richard Reast	RRU	
Mark Jones	RRU	
Gerry Taylor	Eco Schools	
Janie Pridham	ESDGC Schools Networks	
John Hirons	Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens	
Dafydd Owen	Organic Centre Wales	
Mike Ward	Food for Life programme, Soil Association	
David Burrige	Grower, RENEW	Powys
Sarah Gould	LANTRA	
Chris Jones	Swansea Community Farm/FCFCG	
Delyth Rees	Teacher Llandeilo Primary School	Carms
Jane Richmond	Head of Learning and Interpretation, NGBW	
Diane Hobley	Education & Resource Officer	

Report prepared by the Growing the Future partnership. See

<http://www.organiccentrewales.org.uk/schools-gtf.php>.