

CHARRETTES FOR GARDEN BUILDING

What is a charrette?

The charrette process is a collaborative brainstorming session (or series of sessions) that brings together students, parents, teachers, staff and the community to focus on a collective goal.

What do you need for a charrette at your school?

1. Gather your team! Entice your school community to get them in the door.

- **Build excitement:** Hang student dream gardens in the hall and on bulletin boards to generate interest. Use your school's newsletter, marquis or phone tree to publicize the event.
- **Food:** Sharing a meal brings people together and it can be a big draw for getting folks out at night or on a weekend. Stone Soup or Build-a-Burrito are cheap, community-building options.

2. Present your objectives to your charrette team. Be specific. Be open to ideas.

3. Gather Information. Create mixed teams and find out what *they* want.

- **Dream Gardens:** A great way for everyone (especially kids) to get their ideas on paper. Dream big and don't forget the bird's eye view. The sky is the limit!
- **Surveys:** Canvas your school community to find out what folks want in their garden. Keep surveys in the front office. Use 5 minutes of a PTA or staff meeting. Will teachers use it for a science experiment or art lesson? IRA outdoors? Do parents want to have lunch with their kids? Do the kindergarteners need a mint bed to nibble?

4. Share. Each group can share what they came up with. Have a translator if needed. Use sticker voting to find out priorities.

5. Closing. Thank the community for joining in the process of garden building. The Charrette Steering Committee, usually the Garden Committee, looks at all the ideas and determines feasibility, priority and next steps. Now is the time for realism.

6. Share your results with the community.

- Host another event for your charrette team and share the results of the workshop. It will be wonderful for people to see their goals realized.
- If holding another event is too complicated, a bulletin board in a high-traffic area of the school will help get the word out. You can also use the bulletin board as an interactive tool to collect more information from the community.

7. Build Your Dream! By bringing the community together for the charrette process, you have generated a lot of support for your school or community garden. Because people are invested in the garden, you will have more shovels breaking ground, more summer watering volunteers and, in the end, more kids munching crisp, delicious snow peas and fresh, sweet strawberries.

CHARRETTE BRAINSTORM

Get the process started.

Get the word out! How will you let parents and the community know about the event?
(Newsletter, phone tree, media, school marquis...)

Can you think of any ideas that would entice participants? (Stone Soup, potluck, plant raffle...)

Do you have a Garden Committee at your school or a group you think might want to head the process? (teachers, PTA parents, staff...)

Would you be willing to lead a dream garden activity with your class/staff/other parents? What is your time frame?

Can you think of some ways *you* would use the garden classroom?

