Creativity and Innovation Grant
Learning Gardens, Lowell Public Schools

These Creativity and Innovation Grant will be used as a vehicle to connect our school garden initiative, which includes a garden at each of our 8 middle schools, and 5 at our elementary schools, across the city.

Lowell has recently received a multi year Farm to School Grant from the USDA along with a number of smaller grants. All of these grants focus on gardening and healthy food choices. One school is using a grant from Verizon to install a cooking station as well as a weather station, something that all schools in the district can access.

Lowell continues to work closely with Mill City Grows (MCG) a non-profit organization, that fosters food justice in Lowell. MCG work to create urban food production sites, such as our school gardens, and they provide Lowell residents knowledge to grow their own food or to purchase locally grown food! MCG not only helps implement our gardens but they also provides support, training and advice to both our teaches and support staff at each school. MCG provide staff from Food Corp and Project Bread that bring healthy food directly to our students and families in the way of free farmers markets. In addition, they conduct classroom-connected lessons that incorporate science, math and social studies as well as lessons on food preparation.

This grant is allowing our task force to develop units that directly connect the new revised science and engineering standards to the school gardens by providing STEM (Science Technology and Engineering) related activities, lessons and increased project-based learning.

We have decided to work grade by grade with overarching themes which allow students to directly interact with the garden and feel valued as garden stewards. Because of the expertise they will gain as they learn about food webs, cycles and energy, they will become educated advisors and or members of garden clubs. They will be able to relate their experiences to broader standards as they study ecology and human impact. We hope to inspire students to continue the work as they prepare projects that become part of the districts science and engineering fair.

The Creativity and Innovation Grant is providing the opportunity to link the related projects to our school learning gardens along with the revised standards that center on the practices and skills of science. We want to provide teachers a relevant and engaging unit that is standards based, engaging and meaningful to all students and educators.