

Growing More Gardens For NYC Schools

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NEW YORK — Councilwoman Jessica Lappin has introduced a bill which she says will help bring the “farm-to-table” concept to students throughout the city by fostering the development of school gardens.

“New York City kids know how to navigate the subway system, but many have no idea where their food comes from,” Lappin said in an interview today.

The “farm-to-table” concept aims to educate people about how meats and grains are grown and then processed into the food that ends up in their meals.

Lappin’s bill, which she introduced at yesterday’s stated Council meeting and will go through the committee on education that she sits on, would establish a new interagency school gardens “team” within the mayor’s Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability.

The team would consist of the commissioners of Buildings, Education, Environmental Protection, Health and Parks, as well as the chairperson of City Planning.

The team would be responsible for creating a catalogue of school gardens throughout the city; promoting community participation in school gardens; and spurring development of new gardens through incentive programs.

The team would also be required to submit an annual report on school gardens to the mayor and the Council speaker.

The bill was inspired by Grow to Learn NYC, the citywide school garden initiative established in 2010 as a public-private partnership between the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City, GrowNYC and a number of government agencies.

The goal of the program is to inspire, promote and facilitate the creation of sustainable gardens in public schools throughout New York City. Such gardens, the program argues, lead to changing eating habits, connecting children to the environment, and fighting childhood obesity.

While there are roughly 1,600 public schools in New York City’s education system, only 229 schools throughout the city’s five boroughs are currently registered with Grow to Learn NYC as having gardens.

There are many similar programs throughout the United States, including Washington DC’s City Blossom, Sacramento’s WE Garden in Capital Park, and Chicago’s Organic School Project.

Gardens are located in classrooms, schoolyards, rooftops and, occasionally, are run in partnership with urban farms or community gardens.

Image of 5th Street Farm, a New York City public school green roof farm, courtesy of [Inhabitat](#). Used under Creative Commons license.

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