



By: Cary Brown and Tara Offenbacher, UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe

Magnet School wants to Grow Green!

The Growing Green Program at the Lake Tahoe Environmental Science Magnet School (Magnet School) would like to design, construct and provide a well needed *Green Space* for the school and surrounding neighborhood. Our proposal would transform the unutilized turf area located in front of the school into a functional *Green Space* enabling our students to learn hands-on based science and nutrition.

The proposed *Green Space* will feature a greenhouse, raised beds (relocated), pollinator garden along with native shrubs, plants and trees. The area will include cobble stone drainage, walking paths, and a shed with necessary tools. The greenhouse will provide a year-round, engaging, hands-on facility for students, who will be extensively involved in the growing, harvesting, and distribution of food.

The *Green Space* project will further develop the science-based agriculture curriculum that has begun to take shape through the successful indoor vertical gardens and cold frames installed in the last two years. The greenhouse will allow more students at more grade levels to learn hands-on based science and nutrition. Installing a greenhouse at the Magnet School will provide the opportunity for the students to engage directly with plants and help bridge the gap between theory and practice. Experiential learning forces students to think critically and develop skills to think independently. The environmental science focus of the Magnet has a lot of the built-in infrastructure and training to truly benefit from an enlarging its growing capacity.

The greenhouse could provide a year-round, engaging, hands-on facility for students, who will be extensively involved in the growing, harvesting, and distribution of food. A core team of parents, teachers and a few community volunteers will manage its operations. A greenhouse would enable us to bring students out by class to have hands on lessons about soil, seed propagation, and maintenance of growing plants and vegetables. In the greenhouse, students and families would have the opportunity to grow food from starters or seed, observe and care for the plants as they mature and finally harvest and taste their produce. With a greenhouse, we could work with teachers on garden lessons and hands-on activities to further augment the opportunity to work with our New Generation Science Standards.

The possibilities are endless! We are most excited about getting this project up and running so we can make everyday Earth Day. So we can make efforts to teach and become more sustainable. To make advances in growing locally and eating from our own gardens. To understand what organic gardening means and to learn how to problem solve in this green environment. To understand what it means to be full circle in our lives.

There will be many upcoming opportunities for anyone who would like to participate to get involved. **In the immediate future, we need someone with landscape design experience to help us finalize the Green Space layout and create a rendering.** Please contact Cary Brown at cbflowerpower@hotmail.com or Tara Offenbacher at tboscho@gmail.com if you are able to help.