



Cornell University

College of Human Ecology

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Dear AASHE Program Staff:

I'm pleased to attest to appropriateness of the USDA-funded *Healthy Gardens, Healthy Youth* People's Garden Pilot Project for an AASHE innovation credit for Cornell University.

I lead the research component of the *Healthy Gardens Healthy Youth* project. I can certify that the *Healthy Gardens, Healthy Youth* project is truly an innovative sustainability program. The project, which is a collaboration among Washington State University, Iowa State University, the University of Arkansas, and Cornell University, engages the Cooperative Extension system in four states to implement and study school gardens at nearly 50 schools, 15 of which are in New York State. The project delivers gardens as well as a tool kit of garden-based curriculum to teach youth a variety of sustainability-related lessons focused on themes such as nutrition, health, horticulture, plant science, and food systems.

Reaching more than 2000 students in four states, the project focuses on the most vulnerable youth -- predominantly ethnic minorities in under-resourced communities -- who are most at risk for poor diet, physical inactivity, obesity, and the associated health problems. This project aims to improve both the ecological literacy of these at-risk youth as well as their health and health-related behaviors.

The research component of *Healthy Gardens, Healthy Youth* is also innovative. The study is a true experiment -- a randomized controlled trial -- in which youth at the garden intervention schools are compared to those attending wait-list control schools (that receive gardens at the end of the project). A combination of surveys and objective measures are used to assess outcomes.

By focusing on both outreach and research, this project aims to create a model for school garden programs and to provide an evidence-base to assess and improve the effectiveness of garden intervention programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy M. Wells".

Nancy M. Wells, PhD
Associate Professor