

# From the Creators



*“Your class has the potential to become an empowered and reflective group that’s thoughtful in decision making and unified...for the common good of making their “neighborhood” a better place--something fourth and fifth graders never get involved in because they are too young, right? WRONG! Be prepared to see your children become articulate speakers, letter writers, and problem solvers as they unify themselves while talking to town and city managers about changes that would make a difference in everyone’s lives.”*

-Anne Tewksbury-Frye, Fourth/Fifth-grade Teacher  
Lawrence Barnes Elementary School, Burlington, Vermont

The Healthy Neighborhoods/Healthy Kids project was initiated in 2003 by Smart Growth Vermont, in partnership with Shelburne Farms’ Sustainable Schools Project (SSP). It was designed to introduce school students to concepts related to community design, public safety, civic engagement, and personal health, focusing on the relationship between the “health” of our neighborhoods and our personal well-being. By using SSP’s framework of Education for Sustainability (EFS) and tools from Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe’s UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN, in conjunction with Smart Growth Vermont’s research and understanding of Vermont’s settlement patterns and the relationship between neighborhood development and design on public health and safety, this project was developed to support current curriculum and the goals of education standards while engaging students in developing sustainable communities.

In collaboration with the Burlington School District in Vermont, Healthy Neighborhoods/Healthy Kids projects were piloted at three Burlington schools: Champ-lain, Lawrence Barnes, and H.O. Wheeler Elementary Schools. These pilot projects, which were widely considered great successes, helped develop the Healthy Neighborhoods/Healthy Kids model, test the project’s assumptions, and fine-tune the activities and associated tools in this guide.

The guide was developed to serve as a map for interested teachers and school officials to successfully facilitate and implement activities in other communities. In addition to the contents of the guide, Shelburne Farms hosts professional development institutes for educators in related content.

Through participation in the Healthy Neighborhoods/Healthy Kids curriculum, elementary school students can form partnerships with health care, community, and environmental organizations for hands-on education, outreach and demonstration projects to combat inactivity and poor health. Students can learn about what makes a neighborhood “healthy” and improve their over all health by engaging in neighborhood revitalization and community planning.