Executive Summary: Project Milestone IAITC Grant Success

The DEAL (Drop Everything and Lead) Garden Club recently completed a rigorous application process for the Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom (IAITC) grant, supported by state Rep.Tony Macombie. Their dedication and collaborative spirit resulted in a successful award, paving the way for a transformative project this coming spring. The group is led by Mrs. Monika Huhn and Mrs. Deb Sweeney

The Application Process

The journey to the grant award was a multi-step effort that combined student advocacy with strategic planning:

- **Student Advocacy & Letters:** In a powerful display of student voice, around 15 personalized letters were written by Garden Club members. These letters were sent to state representatives and evaluators, articulating the students' passion for agriculture and the impact the garden would have on their learning environment.
- **Mentorship & Collaboration:** Students didn't work alone; they collaborated closely with their mentors to refine their ideas. These mentors provided guidance on feasibility, agricultural best practices, and the professional standards required for a state-level grant.
- **Comprehensive Planning:** The final submission was a robust package that included:
  - Detailed Action Plans: Outlining the "how" and "when" of the garden's development.
  - Technical Drawings: Visual representations and site maps of the proposed garden space.
  - Formal Proposals: Integrating the student letters and mentor insights into a cohesive narrative.

The Result

Because of this thorough and heartfelt approach, the Garden Club was officially awarded the grant. This funding ensures that the students' drawings and plans will become a reality.

Looking Ahead

With the winter months used for preparation, the Garden Club is set to break ground this Spring. The project will serve as a living classroom where students can lead, learn, and grow literal "fruits of their labor." I want to share the letters and the plans with you. They are incredible!