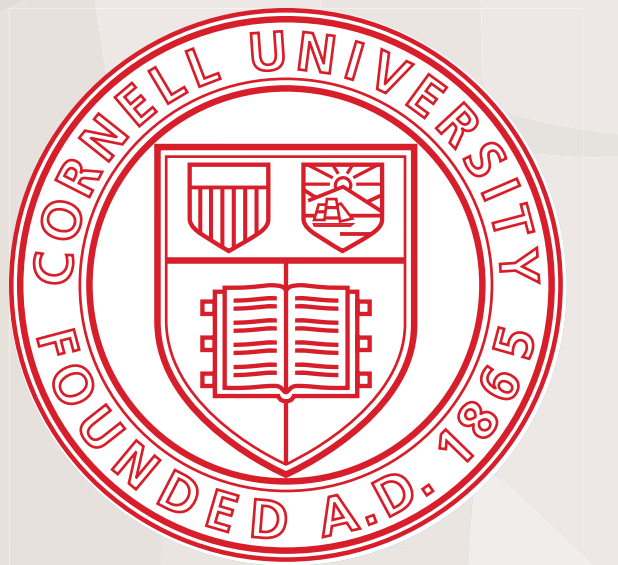


# SCHOOL INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAM:



## DEVELOPING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

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### ABSTRACT

School decision-makers often look to other schools for insights on successful programs. This underlines the importance of establishing model integrated pest management (IPM) programs at schools. We are utilizing a “learning community” of school personnel, peer mentors, and cooperative extension educators to develop district-level model school IPM programs in the lower Hudson River Valley. The goal is to have participating districts eligible for the IPM Institute’s STAR school IPM certification. In addition, we have two “focus” projects of 1) improving IPM-related management of athletic fields and 2) improving classroom sanitation via IPM curricula and teacher/student/facilities staff interaction.

Schools are sensitive locations for pest management. Children, because of their size and developmental stage, are more vulnerable to pesticides than adults. To protect them we must decrease pesticide use in schools. Yet we cannot compromise the quality of pest control because pests such as cockroaches and mice present equally important health hazards. Pest management in schools is challenging because of the variety of heavily used settings, including classrooms, cafeterias, auditoriums, and playing fields. A 2002 statewide survey revealed that many New York State schools want to adopt IPM but they need in-depth training, technical assistance, and on-going support.

One of the strengths and challenges of IPM is its reliance on a site-specific strategy. Although this means that IPM is easily tailored to address the needs of schools with dramatically different circumstances, the approach requires knowledge of pests and their environments, familiarity with the many IPM tactics, and experience in developing and implementing an IPM plan, which requires the cooperation of the whole staff. To secure this cooperation, the school needs a leader who will educate, inspire, and guide others.

This two-year project based in the lower Hudson Valley is establishing a network of such leaders, school buildings and grounds personnel, who are trained IPM practitioners and advocates. By working with a small local group, we hope to establish close relationships among our participants, so they will continue to support each other’s IPM efforts long after the project ends. This “learning community” includes the participants, IPM trainers (NYS IPM Program staff and local Cooperative Extension educators), and peer mentors (two award-winning school pest managers from the downstate area).

The project provided funds for each school, to help defray the cost of implementing IPM (a major constraint to IPM adoption, according to our 2002 survey). Interviews at some of these schools in 2003 highlighted some of their major pest management concerns, such as the need for constituency outreach, improved sanitation, heavy use of athletic fields, and specific pests such as stinging insects, ants, mice, weeds, and geese.

Organizing the “learning community” team that will develop the three model programs.



Three school districts agreed to participate in the project. The districts are Minisink Valley, Monroe-Woodbury, and Scarsdale. Key personnel from the districts, NYS IPM Program staff, local county extension educators, peer mentors, and Tom Green from the IPM Institute met in June 2004. During this meeting, we reviewed the basic concepts and tenets of IPM in schools. Tom Green then described the IPM Institute’s STAR certification program, and we discussed its role in our project. Finally we discussed the general process of the project, the school districts’ needs and desires, and the scheduling of the initial assessments.

Utilizing the IPM Institute’s “IPM Standards for Schools” to assess the current status of the pest management programs of the cooperating schools.



The IPM Institute had recently developed a concise version of the “IPM Standards for Schools” for STAR certification audits. During October 2004, the project’s assessment team (NYS IPM Program staff, extension educators, and peer mentors) visited

the three cooperating school districts and using this audit format, conducted detailed assessments of the districts’ pest management programs. The assessments took a full day per district. Several of the assessment team made follow-up visits to two of the school districts for further evaluation of athletic fields. Also, team members interviewed the districts’ structural pest control contractors. Each district sent me a list of pesticides used within the past year. These were evaluated using a risk assessment database provided by the IPM Institute.

Developing and pursuing individualized IPM improvement plans via collaborative interaction among the three cooperating school districts, extension IPM specialists, and peer mentors. The goal is qualification for the IPM Institute’s STAR school certification.

A listserv was established to facilitate interaction among the project participants. The school districts were to develop and post pest management development plans by mid-January 2005. Two of the districts met this deadline.



In August 2005, the project team met for a mid-point evaluation of the project. The status of the school districts’ pest management development plans were reported and discussed. Plans were made for the team to assist the districts as they continued to implement their plans. In addition to (and overlapping with) the individual details of each plan, the project team will focus on two major projects. One project will focus on IPM-related improvements to athletic fields in the cooperating districts. The second project will address classroom sanitation and incorporate teacher/student outreach via IPM curricula.

Evaluating the success of the cooperating districts’ IPM development plans.



Using the IPM Institute’s STAR certification audit form, the school districts were re-assessed in April 2006. Since the focus was on areas highlighted by the initial assessment, this audit only took a half-day per district. The entire team then met in late April to discuss the status and the over-all success of the project.

Communicating the results of the three model programs locally, statewide, and throughout the Northeast.

In May 2006, the school districts will host a demonstration workshop that will highlight IPM-related improvements to the districts’ athletic fields. During the fall of 2006, the classroom sanitation and teacher/student project will be demonstrated at the Scarsdale school district. A NYS IPM Program writer will document the project as case studies for selected educational and pest management publications.