Testing Scenarios Using Electronic Spreadsheets (Center 3)

At this learning center, you will create an online spreadsheet to test various scenarios of costs for creating your garden. First, you will decide which plants you want to include in your garden and how many of each plant you will need to buy to fill your space. You will then set up a spreadsheet to calculate the cost. One of the benefits of using spreadsheets is that they allow for “what if” scenarios. In this case, you can determine what the cost will be for various configurations of the plants you choose to include in your garden.

There are many plant combinations you might choose based on a number of factors, including plant hardiness and color, size and location of your garden, and your budget. Once you create your spreadsheet, you can test various combinations before you head to the nursery to purchase your plants.

If you have already been to the Texas climate and plants center (Center 2), you will have created an idea map of the plants you need. If you have not yet been to that center, you can make changes to your spreadsheet later based on what you learn there. Because you will be using an online spreadsheet, you will be able to access it from any of the centers.

Instructions

1. Your task is to design a spreadsheet to calculate the cost of planting a garden that is 10 feet long by 4 feet wide.
   
   In an earlier session, we calculated the area of a garden patch and how much of various products we would need to kill the weeds in it. Now that the weeds are gone, it is time to calculate how many plants and how much mulch you will need. (If you have not been to Center 1, you will explore there how much water, light, and fertilizer is needed to optimize the growth of your plants.)

2. Use the free online tool Google Docs to create your spreadsheet. Handout 9 provides a quick guide for creating a spreadsheet in Google Docs. (Other online spreadsheet tools are also available.)

3. Read the quick guide and browse through the resources provided. Then follow the instructions to create your spreadsheet and determine the costs of your garden.

4. Before asking a facilitator for help creating your spreadsheet, try to find the answer in the online help system or by consulting with your group. This problem-solving approach models how students should work together on solutions rather than just asking the teacher for help.