



# Shrewsbury Public Schools

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Assistant Superintendent

## **Garden Donation from Home Depot**

### **Overview**

Home Depot is generously offering a community partnership grant of \$30,000 to support Shrewsbury's PreK-8 schools in building a variety of on-site gardening structures. This donation would augment our students opportunities to engage in authentic learning experiences designed to enhance the teaching of the district's science curriculum. A brief description of how the funds would be spent at each school location can be found in the following section.

A team of dedicated teachers met on 1/17/2017 to share the spending proposals with Scott Selmicki from Home Depot. Each school is being assigned a Team Manager from Home Depot who will work with the school within to further define and develop the plan outlined below. Team Managers will help the building representatives with the development of a materials list and well as tasks lists that need to be accomplished before the build day. Pending School Committee approval, the build date is tentatively set for April 1<sup>st</sup> and work is underway to solidify a plan for communicating the goals and opportunities for involvement to the public.

### **Parker Road:** Kristin Stewich

Here at Parker Road Preschool our primary goal by expanding our garden will be to continue to build an outdoor classroom/sensory garden that will foster social interaction, build a strong sense of community, build self esteem and a connection with nature. Within each one of these experiences the children will be engaged with essential opportunities to make strong and real connections to a multitude of academic standards from the Massachusetts' Frameworks. The garden will provide our students with real life math, science, language, gross/fine motor, and social/emotional opportunities.

The garden will continue to be accessible and inclusive to all students. We hope to build additional raised beds where we will grow more fruits and vegetables to hopefully share within our school community and beyond. Additional space for seating will be added so that children can sit and draw or work within the garden. We also hope to add additional sensory materials that will engage the student's sense of sight, smell, touch, taste and sound. Our outdoor classroom will continue to

be a therapeutic and calming place to gently stimulate the senses in a setting where our students feel safe and relaxed.

The entire school community has maintained the garden for 4 years now. Watering, weeding, planting is done by all staff and students as needed. Presently, we have a garden committee that includes Kristin Stewich (school nurse), Jenn Vangel (classroom teacher), Maria Grimshaw (SLP), Donna Crowley (classroom assistant), Dominic Ruggiere (community volunteer), Chris Tighe (Home Depot associate), and Scott Selmecki (Home Depot Manager).

**Beal:** Becky Dumphy

Beal School is planning to have 4 raised beds on the right hand side of the school. Surrounding the raised beds will be walkways that are ADA compliant, allowing all learners to access the gardens. We are also planning for 2 picnic tables that convert into benches to allow for students to record observations about the garden.

Classrooms will be able to use this area for science observation, read-a-louds, writing blocks, and many more activities. Classrooms are beginning to discuss the gardens and brainstorming what we would like to grow in the gardens. The classroom teachers that have agreed to be part of the first phase this year are Lynn Pinto, Beth McNerny, and Charlene Costello. Students will be involved in the planning, measuring, researching, planting, caring for these gardens. Over the summer months we plan to involve the families of our students to sign up to water and care for and also harvest from the garden. There will be an irrigation system put in for the gardens to help with the care for the garden. We would love to be able to harvest some of the food and have students bring it to local food banks in our community.

**Coolidge:** Marci Rubin

Coolidge School is hoping to maintain our current garden beds in front of our school. Our previous project with the garden included 3 raised garden beds, bean plants and sunflower gardens. Our kindergarten students (now first graders) planned and implemented the garden and had a culminating garden party where we were able to host families and harvest some of what we produced. Although this was our first try at this, our intention this year is to engage other grade levels to help maintain our gardens. In addition, we have been working on composting and recycling, and will be asking for materials that will help us with that.

We are also looking to utilize a space outside our cafeteria, that isn't great for garden growth (lack of sun, small area), but we feel would be a great spot for some bird/butterfly attracting cotoneasters. Our other plan is to align this with other science standards that crosses grade levels (such as life cycles and recycling) by creating large sculptures/birdfeeders alongside these plants/shrubs that will be

made from treated wood and recycled bottle caps. We are planning on making 3-4 large sculptures/birdfeeders and 3-4 cotoneaster.

**Floral:** Kara Frankian

Floral Street School is hoping to create several raised beds in the area next to the existing playground structure. Although the design is not yet formalized, measurements have been taken and students are in the process of creating a full scale map of the area to be certain the lay out will be ADA compliant. Attached at the end of these summaries are the connections to the new science standards. We will establish clear lesson plans that can be simply replicated at each building regardless of the specific set up of the space or the plants chosen for cultivation. At FSS, The beds will initially be maintained and cared for by a combination of the Frankian, Peterson, Young and Richard classrooms with the hope that all classes in grades 1 – 3 will eventually take over a growing space. At this point in time, Laura Spangenberg is interested in taking on the compost area of the gardens, working with her students to define what this approach will look like as well as how students can be actively involved. Bob Wilson (art), Joshua Nichols, Sarah Willander (ELL), Liz Ushinski (grade 3), Deb Richard, Amy Leonardson (instructional aides) and David Poe (custodian) have all expressed support for the project and are interested in helping with the planning and to make sure we have a successful plan for care during the summer months. There are 2 classes being proposed that will run a program that has campers directly caring for the beds. During the month of July and we intend line up weekend watering schedules as well as involving the special education programs that work throughout the summer. It will be our goal to have students will help to connect hosing to the bed irrigation system, weed and harvest grown vegetables. It is our hope that the produce grown will be shared with our local food bank and we are planning on making a formal connection once we are certain we have the endorsement of the School Committee.

**Paton:** Lisa Papazian and Joan Carlson

Paton will be building 4 raised beds (a K-1, 2, 3, & 4 area for planting). In addition to growing space, they are planning to use stone pavers to create a usable sundial. A small garden shed and the addition of 6 picnic tables will help teachers to keep tools organized as well as use the space as an outdoor classroom and a working space for students. We want student input as to what types of plants will be used in the garden, so classrooms will start to research and brainstorm ideas of what to include in the garden. We are also looking to expand the use of our academe, which is located in the back of our building. Students will also be designing rocks with messages of kindness to be included in the garden. Outdoor speakers and a sound feature will contribute to an area in the garden that will focus on sensory development. We anticipate that this sensory garden space will be used by all

classrooms but is located near the ELC classrooms to service students with different learning needs. Finally, an area for composting will be developed.

**Spring:** Donna Rice

Spring Street School is planning to have 2 raised beds on the right hand side of portable classrooms. Surrounding the raised beds is a wide paved walkway so that students will be able to access the area easily. Classrooms will be able to use this area for various science observations as well as to understand goods and services. Classrooms are beginning to discuss the gardens and brainstorming what we would like to grow in the gardens. Though first grade classrooms will certainly access the garden frequently during their life science unit, I anticipate many classrooms finding an interest in the growing and changing that will happen in the garden. Students will be involved in the planning, measuring, researching, planting, caring for these gardens. Over the summer months we plan to involve the families of our students to sign up to water and care for and also harvest from the garden. We would also look forward to donating fresh vegetables to those in need.

**Sherwood:** Lisa Pashou

Sherwood has already established its garden in the front entrance of the school. We have five raised beds that the ELC program has been planting its gardens in. For the past several years, our students have been planting various vegetables and flowers. Our students have learned the responsibility of caring and nurturing the gardens. They really enjoy the hands on experience and the fulfillment of watching their garden grow. The students are able to eat the vegetables that they grow and learn the process of growing them. To continue this excellent tradition, Sherwood would like to propose installing six benches around the raised beds. The purpose of this is so that the students may treat the gardens like an outdoor classroom. In addition, the entire Sherwood community may also observe and interact with the garden. Sherwood would additionally like to propose fencing for the garden. In the past, we have encountered issues with animals getting into the garden and eating the plants within the garden. We believe that these new additions will help the Sherwood community expand the learning opportunities surrounding the garden.

**Oak:** In Process

At Oak Middle School, we have a wonderful, centrally located courtyard with safe open space for a vibrant outdoor learning area. It is an interesting ecosystem consisting of green grass, a pond with fish and rare blue frogs, and two raised garden beds. However, it is in need of help and refurbishment!! Our vision for the grant funds it to help Oak “bring it back life” as a hands-on learning and growing space. To do this, we would need to enhance the vegetable growing beds, add a pathway to make it accessible to our students with mobility challenges, add a

composting area, and expand the learning opportunities for our students by adding benches for observation areas. Specifically, we would like to add an additional raised bed, at an elevated height so it is wheelchair accessible. We would like to bring our pond back to life to allow continued study of complex ecosystems. We would like to begin composting waste from our cafeteria. We would like soil and plantings, so we could provide produce to donate to a local agency, such as Veterans Inc. on South Street in Shrewsbury. There are a myriad of meaningful learning opportunities for students that link to our curriculum, including in math (scaling, volume calculations, dimensional figures, data analysis, exponential functions, growth rate calculations); in science (ecosystems and decomposition, plant growth cycles, plant DNA); in ELA (journaling, claim/evidence/reasoning writing, pro/con position papers for farm-to-school initiatives) and in social sciences (sustainability, food sources, soil and land uses, environmental impacts, physical features of growing spaces). Improving Oak's outdoor learning space would further engage students by providing hands-on, project-based learning and community service opportunities in a safe and structured outdoor learning area. Our teachers will be inspired to experiment and innovate with new learning experiences for students, and students will be inspired to challenge themselves and delve into meaningful hands-on learning.