

Name

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Project Proposal

Moreland Woods Outdoor Learning Environment

Select a Category

Education & Technology

Purpose

Background/Project Description

Alongside the Easterbrook Discovery School (EDS) site is an outdoor learning space (1.6 acres) that has been in desperate need of refurbishment for years. A site level committee of teachers, parents, and the leadership team met frequently to discuss and dream about how to make this outdoor science learning space what it once was in the past; a child-centered vibrant learning outdoor classroom where students can experience science, math, and the arts in a way that is hands-on and authentic.

Recently, this dream was presented to the officials at Westgate Church as a possible site for one of their Beautiful Day projects. As many community-based efforts evolve, this one did as well. What started as a refurbishment of the outdoor amphitheater, turned into a beautiful display of human generosity and community capacity when given the chance. Together, the generous efforts of Westgate Church donations, local businesses time and material donations, Home and School Club financial support, support from Moreland Education Foundation, other gifted funding to the school from a past donation, and many hours of parent, staff, and church volunteers, the dream started to become a reality.

Through the support of those mentioned above, the school has been able to complete a large portion of the overall plan in a very short period of time, including the following:

- Revitalized the amphitheater/stage to seat 120 students
- Built a gravel pit for student play
- Outlined pathways for access to all small group learning locations in the woods area
- Refurbished all the benches with new redwood tops
- Removed all dead plants to open up access for California native plants including new (20 donated) oak trees
- Refurbished pond and stream to provide authentic ecosystems for students to study and learn about pond ecosystems
- Installed large, permanent storage shed to store classroom materials and supplies for outdoor lessons
- Removed dead trees and repurposed wood for natural seating and borders

As Westgate Church's volunteer weekend drew to a close, the EDS community, of course, was thankful for their efforts, enthusiasm, and their tremendous support to bring us closer to the dream. However, we are not done with the project and seek this funding to bring this learning environment to all our students in the Moreland School District and make this project an example of what a community can do together.

In order for this project to be complete, we need a one-time infusion of funds to complete the following projects:

- Security
- Accessibility
- Landscaping and Irrigation
- Structures
 - Book library
 - Willow Structure
 - Stainless Steel Sink
- Outdoor Classroom Space

Reasons for the Recommendation

This grant request seeks to provide one-time funding to complete the projects outlined above that were not able to be completed through donated resources, ongoing fundraising efforts, volunteers, and in-kind donations.

Child Impact

Studies show that children today spend an average of five to eight hours a day in front of a digital screen. This

reality is staggering, yet what is even more concerning is how little time children spend outdoors exploring, experimenting, engaging in nature, and learning from the environment around them. Furthermore, children living in West San Jose have significantly less access per capita than other areas in San Jose to park facilities to experience this type of learning environment when they are outside of school. This means that providing this financial support for this project will ultimately provide this space for up to 4,700 Moreland students annually when fully realized. When complete this space can be used by all our schools, for years to come, as an extension of their classroom for scientific and environmental study, leadership, and social-emotional learning. We've found that the outdoor classroom setting eliminates boundaries of language and culture and gives children a very unique opportunity to work, play, and learn together. In addition, our K-8 campus provides an opportunity for middle school students to design learning experiences for younger grades. As part of our long term plan, student leaders will eventually design and lead field trip activities for elementary students from other schools as well as EDS. What a powerful way to nurture our future scientists, entrepreneurs, and educators!

Sustainability Implications

Once fully developed, the Home and School Club at Easterbrook Discovery School has reserved an annual budget line item for maintenance and upkeep of the outdoor classroom including landscape and pond maintenance. This was not done for the initial site that we are currently refurbishing and therefore is the key to sustainability. In addition, student stewardship and regular Family Work Days will continue to engage our EDS community in the use and upkeep of this treasured area. This ongoing annual commitment will make this project sustainable for years to come serving future generations of students in our district.

Consequences of Negative Action

As the committee met, year after year, to discuss this plan they continued to confront one obstacle; funding. While the volunteer and donation efforts of the school community, Westgate Church, and local businesses have launched the dream, we seek your support to complete this project in total so that our children can experience learning in a way that supports them socially, emotionally, and academically. Without this support, I can honestly say, this project will never be complete but will constantly be a "work in progress" distracting from the benefits which could be realized for many of our students.

Location in District 1