

Nature Trail

Cherry Hill Middle School owns 13 acres of wooded property. The Builder's Club has continued to maintain and extend the Nature Trail on this property for the past four years. This year two new bridges and a switch back were added to the trail. An outdoor learning classroom was also rebuilt.

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project? There were two needs met by this project - an environmental need and a human need. The Fair Hill Nature Center conducts yearly stream quality control projects. We wanted to continue our school-linked environmental studies utilizing the small stream and rugged terrain on the school property. We believed we could continue Fair Hill's stream quality project on our property and help monitor the health of the environment. In addition to helping the environment, we strove to help our community members. The students, faculty, neighboring elementary school and the community all have access to the trail created by the Builders Club. We've provided greater community access to the outdoors. The adult advisors enjoyed teaching students to value nature, to build something of lasting value, to improve and protect the land, and to donate time and talents to provide something of worth to others.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to the school curriculum and curricular objectives? This project met many of the objectives for the 6th grade environmental unit. It also met Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) objectives for science.

Best Practice 3: How did participants reflect on their experiences throughout the project? Students enjoyed following up verbally and through written reflections. They kept notes for future crews to use.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project? The students planned each project, secured materials, and set up work crews and schedules. They were real leaders on this project. Creating the notes for future crews to use also shows student leadership and their concern for making this project sustainable.

Best Practice 5: What community partners were worked with on this project? Fair Hill Nature Center

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? Students walked through the property to inspect it and get a general idea of our goals for the year. We also brainstormed how people might use the trail in future (e.g. cartography, photography, running path, erosion control). A plan of action was generated based on the information gathering we did.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project? The students obtained knowledge of plants and trees. They learned how to handle tools and learned general construction skills. They also were introduced to designing a trail and to taking leadership roles in group projects. Overall they gained respect for themselves, others, and the land.

For more information on this project, contact Principal Reginald Canaday, Cherry Hill Middle School, 410-996-5020.