

Shafer Park Millennium Makeover

The community park, Shafer Park, was improved. An outdoor multipurpose theater area was designed and built, various gardens were planned and planted, flower boxes were planted, trees were planted, park benches were painted, and bluebird boxes were built and placed. Grade 4 students (100), high school students (40), and teachers (7) were involved. College students also played a role.

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project? Shafer Park is a relatively small park that depends on town and county funding. As the population of Boonsboro has increased, there were increased signs of environmental impact on the park -- stream erosion, trash, broken benches, etc. Most of our task were environmental improvements, therefore; environmental community needs were met. The children developed a real sense of ownership and responsibility. Adults involved developed a sense of cohesiveness between the school and community members. Relationships among varying age groups improved.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to the school curriculum and curricular objectives? Stream health assessment, erosion control, planting, and bluebird boxes were all connected to science. The concepts of science, nature of science, habits of mind, attitudes, processes and application of science were outcomes covered. Pollution awareness and control involved social studies. Problem solving in math was used in landscape planning and costs. Language arts was integrated across the curriculum.

Best Practice 3: How did participants reflect on their experiences throughout the project? Monthly visits monitoring environmental impact on the stream occurred. Students wrote in journals and created pages on our school website. A gallery of student pictures showed involvement throughout the year. These pictures can be viewed at:

www.wcboe.k12.md.us/mainfold/schoopag/elementary/boonselem/

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project? College students and high school students mentored the fourth graders. A college student supervised a mural painting on one of the pavilions. Horticulture students supervised plantings. Woodshop students designed, built, and placed the outdoor classroom. Grade 4 students had team leaders in every task group.

Best Practice 5: What community partners were worked with on this project? The Milken Family Foundation provided funding by grant. The Boonsboro Park Board provided a wish list of projects. Our school PTA provided refreshments at each monthly visit. Various community members volunteered to help supervise the children on each trip to the park.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? A grant was written and submitted to the Milken Foundation. A meeting with the Park Board to discuss needed improvements was held. A teacher team meeting was held to plan visits, discuss materials needed, and plan related lessons. The project leader planned for task supplies and equipment.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project? The whole idea promoted respect for our national, historical, and community riches. Science and math process skills were improved. Reading and writing skills were enhanced with directions, planning guides, and assessment activities. Our children raised the awareness of the community to foster environmental stewardship. Social skills among various age groups were improved. Students saw adults as partners in acquiring and dispensing knowledge.

For more information contact Jeanne Ecton at Boonsboro Elementary School, 5 Campus Ave., Boonsboro, MD 21713, jmecton@umd5.umd.edu