



FOUR WINDS NATURE INSTITUTE
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Schoolyard Improvement Grants Awarded 2007

The grant to **Ferrisburgh Central School** will be used to improve a schoolyard habitat by repairing a bridge; building benches, bird houses, and a bird blind; planting fruit trees and removing poison ivy. Students, teachers, staff, and community volunteers will all take part in the work. The proposal was written by Kristina MacKulin of North Ferrisburgh.

The successful **North Bennington** proposal, written by Dan Taub of North Bennington, seeks to build a composting center and butterfly garden on a plot of land next to the school. With the help of the school board, area businesses, and a group of volunteers, the community will install compost bins for school lunch scraps, and will landscape the plot with nectar and food plants intended to provide food and habitat for butterflies and caterpillars.

Michael Wolfgang, the author of the **Summit Street (Essex Junction) School's** successful proposal, plans to install and maintain a weather station at the school with the help of parents, teachers, and volunteers. A variety of weather instruments will allow students to study seasons and local climate.

In **Montpelier, Union Elementary School** received a grant to put in a bird and butterfly garden. In a decidedly urban setting, Union School has little outdoor green space. In the proposal, Shawn White noted that the garden will provide habitat for flora and fauna, a place for students to learn and play, and a model for using native plants in landscaping urban areas.

Schoolyard Improvement Grants Awarded 2008

Maria Garland, **Sherburne Elementary School** in Killington, VT, will use their grant to restore a school nature trail. Each class will plan a station along the trail, and mailboxes will be installed at each station to provide guides and activities.

At **Bingham Memorial School** in Cornwall, VT, they plan to improve a bird feeding area in front of the school. The grant will go toward native shrubs and solar-heated bird baths, as well as binoculars and field guides so student groups can monitor activity at the feeding station. The proposal was written by Kristi Tolgyesi.

Mt. Lebanon School in West Lebanon, NH, will use their grant to improve a bird and butterfly garden near a corner of the school. They will purchase stones for a seating area and for steps over a berm, in addition to plants for the garden. Nancy Hall wrote the successful proposal.

Michael Malone, of **Fairfield Center School**, will install a weather station at the school to help in the study of maple sugaring at the school's sugarhouse. Students will study the relationship between weather, sap flow, and sugar content in the sap. Data will be collected over a period of years for comparison of climate over time.

Schoolyard Improvement Grants Awarded 2009

Carmen George will lead an effort at **C.P. Smith School** in Burlington to renovate a Natural World Learning Center in a courtyard of the school. New native plants, bird houses, and a birdbath will attract wildlife to this urban school; while seating and signage will help students and community members appreciate the setting.

Richmond Elementary School, led by Jeanette Malone, will work with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps and local volunteers to construct a nature trail and outdoor instruction area on land behind the school. VYCC will clear a trail and a small clearing with rough benches; students and volunteers will conduct an inventory of plants and animals, and create a schoolyard habitat booklet.

Schoolyard Improvement Grants Awarded 2010

Bellows Free Academy – Fairfax received a grant to enhance a natural area around the school. Bat and bird houses will be built and installed, and a laminated map will guide students and community members to sites of interest along the trail. Amy Rogers submitted the successful proposal.

Fayston Elementary School will contribute to a Reverence of Place initiative in the Chase Brook Town Forest. Students will create an outdoor learning display near the trailhead. Cory Stephenson will integrate the school's efforts with a larger community initiative.

Julie Miller-Johnson will lead **Hiawatha Elementary School** in Essex Junction in using their Four Winds mini-grant to create a wildflower meadow on the school grounds. The meadow will contain native plants and will be set off by a rail fence.

NewBrook Elementary School in Newfane will use their mini-grant to continue to develop a wooded parcel of land adjacent to the school. Bird and bat houses will be added to the existing trail system, and an interpretive nature walk will be installed. Marc Pickering wrote the proposal to Four Winds.

Polly Mahoney at **Woodstock Elementary School** is spear-heading an effort to build a trail up a steep slope behind the school to improve access to a natural area. Many community groups are assisting, including Farm and Wilderness, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, and Change the World Kids.

Schoolyard Improvement Grants Awarded 2011

Bolton
Newport
Brattleboro Academy

Mettawee Community School is building an outdoor classroom. The first phase of the project will be to install benches for 20-30 students, surrounding a central table. The space will be enclosed by plantings of fruit trees, bushes, and the beginnings of a butterfly garden. Lynn Pratt wrote the successful proposal.

Shara Buffington is leading an effort at **Enfield Village School** to construct a wildflower garden next to the playground as part of a school-wide Gardening Project. The wildflowers will attract birds and insects, and will become an area for nature study. Mascoma Savings Bank is providing matching funds.

Flood Brook Union School in Londonderry, VT, will be using their Four Winds mini-grant to build a butterfly and hummingbird garden in a central courtyard, visible from the library and multiple classrooms. Native plants will be chosen for their effectiveness in attracting butterflies.

In Bolton, VT, volunteers at the **Smilie Memorial School** will use their mini-grant to clean up a small forest adjacent to the school from the effects of Hurricane Irene, and then to build a nature trail through the woods to an outdoor classroom with benches for student seating.

Schoolyard Improvement Grants Awarded 2012

As part of a larger *Natural Playground* initiative, **Summit Street School in Essex Junction** is going to add native plants and birdfeeders to a Reading Garden. The Reading Garden already features benches and a stone "word garden". The plantings will also provide an area for Four Winds nature study.

Edmunds Elementary School in Burlington is using a Four Winds mini-grant to build terraces on a hillside near the school, making more useable space for planting native flowers and shrubs. This project represents a partnership between the school, UVM, IBM, City Market, and the PTO.

In Cornwall, VT, the **Bingham Memorial School** is one of the first schools to receive a second Four Winds mini-grant (Essex Junction's Summit Street School is another). Back in 2008, Bingham used their grant to enhance the area in front of the school, making it friendlier to birds and insects. Now, with matching funds from the community, they will build an outdoor classroom for nature study. A circle of boulders and slab tables will provide a view of a meadow and tree line.

Rutland Town School is also receiving a mini-grant to develop an outdoor classroom, but theirs will use log benches and will be in a natural area, accessed by a renovated nature trail. Stafford Technical Center and several other community organizations will provide labor and support.

Williston's Allen Brook School will use their mini-grant to improve a path down to the brook, providing easier access to the water for nature study. Planting native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers along the path will increase the diversity of plant and animal life, as well.

Schoolyard Improvement Grants Awarded 2013

Charlotte, to make an outdoor classroom.
Keene Valley, to plant a butterfly garden.
St. Albans City, to make an outdoor classroom.
Wardsboro, to build an outdoor classroom.

Schoolyard Improvement Grants Awarded 2014

Townshend, to build a log structure with surrounding pollinator garden;
North Bennington, to plant a butterfly garden at nearby Hiland Hall Garden, a public space the school has been using for outdoor study.

Schoolyard Improvement Grants Pledged 2015

Andover, MA will make a Story Walk™ on the school grounds and adjacent conservation land. It will include 25 wooden stands; and laminated pages from story books will be mounted on them. They will change the story to coincide with the current Four Winds topic. A nice side-light is that they have a buddy program where 5th graders

are paired up with a kindergarten buddy; the Story Walk will give another thing for the buddies to do together, the 5th graders reading to the kinders.

Sacred Heart School is a small, urban, Catholic school. They will use their grant to plant monarch/pollinator gardens around the school and make a bird station with feeders and bird houses. They have started a garden club to steer the project and will send seed packets home with children to encourage plantings in the community, as well.

Cambridge Elementary School is building a pollinator garden with mulched pathways and a seating area. The Cambridge Recreation Center has donated land for the garden, and a student steering committee will work with a local organic farmer and bee-keeper to make decisions about what will be planted. Cambridge Connections, an organization that provides after-school and summer enrichment programs, is collaborating on the project.

Brewster-Pierce Memorial School (Huntington) will work with a variety of community partners to build a covered outdoor classroom. The school has a Forest Fridays program for kindergartners, and would like to have other grades spend more time outdoors. Two local builders and a standing-seam roofer will help in designing and building the shelter. This mini-grant and other funds raised by Parents in Education will go toward building materials.

Underhill ID School will use their mini-grant to restore and repair a nature trail along the river behind the school and an outdoor classroom with wooden benches. They have lined up a lot of community support, including the VYCC, Land Shapes, a hardware store, and a lumber yard, to assist in the project. Students from the Middle School and a nearby pre-school will collaborate on and use the nature trail.