

Dann C. Byck Elementary
Raised Bed Garden
Proposal

Byck Elementary is a Title I school (83% receive free/reduced lunch) located in the Russell Neighborhood. Byck is also the Gifted and Talent Arts magnet for Jefferson County as well as having a Waldorf program for students K-5. As part of the Waldorf curriculum and teaching philosophy, students are to be exposed to and experience nature, both in the classroom and outside. For this purpose, the PTA, along with the Waldorf teachers and students, propose to create a seven (7) raised bed garden area that will enhance the Waldorf philosophy and serve as an educational supplement to the school's core curriculum.

Waldorf education approaches schooling in a unique way. The curriculum is designed to meet the various stages of a child's development. For example, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students learn primarily through imagination and imitation. One of the goals of a Waldorf classroom at this age is to develop a sense of appreciation and reverence for all living things which will lead to an eagerness for the academics that follow in the later grades. If we garden and show children how enjoyable gardening is, the hope is that they too will learn an appreciation of gardening and nature that will guide them throughout their lives.

Our proposed garden area will consist of seven (7) raised beds. Each bed (pre-k through 5) will contain native or regional plants and flowers that bloom and grow during all four seasons. Our children will then experience and learn about seasonal changes first hand. Each bed will be primarily tended by a Waldorf class. The complexity of each bed will change as the children age. For example, a kindergarten bed may contain plants that can be simply maintained. We can register our garden at the Great Sunflower Project and help observe and record the pollination of bees. A fifth grade bed may contain plants that are cultivated from other seed sources utilizing grafting techniques in their beds. Each bed will be approximately 4' x 8' and 6" or 12" deep depending on the plants (see sketch and sample budget sheet). The size of the bed will be determined by the availability of materials. These beds will be placed in the back area of the school near the new playground area. A brick pathway will lead to the garden space. Each bed will be labeled according to grade. Furthermore, our Waldorf students will then become teachers to their peers (kindergarteners teaching other kindergarteners), and encourage their peers to garden as well. The kindergarten student will then advance to the next garden bed as they advance each grade level. The plants and flowers grown will then be sold at one of the local farmer's markets to help educate our students about garden sustainability. The funds raised will then go back into the garden in the form of seeds, additional plants, supplies, and equipment.

Each student (and their families) will be encouraged to join our new gardening club, the Byck Botanists. Our club motto is "Better Agriculture than no culture at all." T-shirts with this statement and the Byck school logo will be available for purchase and allowed to be worn on gardening days. The funds raised from the sales of the tee-shirts will again

be considered “seed money” for the garden club and garden area. In the fall, a cookie-dough fundraiser will be held as well, and a portion of this fundraiser will go to the garden area. The garden will be maintained by students and their families, and by Russell Neighborhood and Byck parent, David Drummond. Mr. Drummond, a professional landscaper, will oversee the building of the garden space as well as maintain it in the summer. Along with Mr. Drummond, parents Mary Oliver Humke and Myrdin Thompson will sponsor the club and assist Waldorf teachers Brad Nance (kindergarten) and Adrienne Moore (First grade) with gardening schedules and off site activities.

This gardening project will also continue to enhance the “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle” and greening efforts of Byck Elementary. This past year on Earth Day our first grade students participated in a campus wide clean up (see photos). Our students also created recycled art objects that were placed on display at Jefferson Mall (see enclosed flyer and photos). Staff from Heine Brothers Coffee’s new project, Breaking New Grounds, will be assisting our students with a composting area. Breaking New Grounds will then be educating our students about the benefits of composting and natural gardening that does not harm or impact the environment in a negative way. The students, with the assistance of the Breaking New Grounds staff, Mr. Drummond, Ms. Oliver Humke, and Ms. Thompson, will build a compost area and use waste materials from the lunch room as a cost effective way to recycle and enhance their gardening efforts.

It is also our future plan to create a rain water collection system where water can be collected from building rooftops into cisterns and will allow our students to water the plants as needed. Thus we again create a connection with nature as a provider and our students as the recipients. This again connects our students to the importance of “reduce, reuse, recycle” and “going green” by implementing environmentally sound choices.

This grant would help us with purchasing the materials to build the beds, purchase the soil for the beds, building the compost area, and purchasing tools (shovels, trowels, wheelbarrows, gloves, and watering cans). We hope that many of the local nurseries will donate plants and seeds or provide them for purchase at a reasonable discount.

It is our goal that this garden will encourage not only our Waldorf students to appreciate the importance of nature, but that it will teach our other Byck students the importance of being in tune with your environment as well. We also believe that this garden will continue to show the residents of the Russell Neighborhood that Byck is an essential and vital part of their community. We hope our students learn a lesson in responsibility: that lovingly nurturing a seed to a mature plant or flower will serve them in other areas of their lives. That by “growing green” our students will learn that they have an infinite amount of potential to course their own lives, which the garden they grow today will lead to a better future tomorrow.

“There are only two lasting bequests we can
hope to give our children. One is roots; the other, wings.”
-Hooding Carter (1907-1072)