

Outdoor Classroom Committee Meeting Notes  
January 30, 2012

The Outdoor Classroom Committee met on January 30 and discussed its vision for the outdoor classroom. In attendance were Laurel Bahar (landscape designer), SCES parents Debbie Boger, Diane Kelleher (SCES PTA President), Amy Kenney, Mi Ae Kim, Robert Kronenberg, Kim McLean, Margy O'Herron, Andrea Savoye, Elise Stigliano, Jen Troke, Cori Vanchieri (also a SSIMS parent), Lester Yuan, and SSIMS parent and PTA President Caroline Wilkins.

The group introduced themselves and reviewed a short history and status of the outdoor classroom project. The main status updates were that the charette planning team has scheduled an evening planning charette for Tuesday, February 28, at 7:30 in the SSIMS media center. This event, which will be facilitated by a charette consultant, will be open to everyone, but we expect it will be attended mainly by parents. In order to get early feedback from teachers, the members of the charette planning team will conduct interviews with grade-level teaching teams and other teachers at SCES over the month of February. The team has prepared a number of questions for teachers to start gathering information about what they would like to see in an outdoor classroom, how they can imagine using such a resource, and what linkages to existing curriculum might be. The planning team hopes to gather similar information from teachers and staff at SSIMS and will be discussing how best to gather this information with SSIMS staff.

The group then turned to articulating a vision for the outdoor classroom. This vision will be informed and shaped by additional input from other members of the community over time. The group identified the following features as important:

The **physical features** of the outdoor classroom should be:

- A beautiful, inspiring place that students find inviting and want to spend time in
- A space with some water elements
- Always changing

The **practical uses** of the outdoor classroom should be:

- Very easy for teachers to use; integrated into existing curriculum
- Hands-on, interactive, interdisciplinary; a place to synthesize information and put academic lessons to real-world use
- Created with phased implementation
- Suited for instruction for ages 5-14

The **outcomes** of the outdoor classroom should be:

- A place where kids can get outside all year to observe seasonal changes
- A place that teaches students life skills like cooperation, discovery, and responsibility
- A place that gives students and teachers a sense of ownership, and of passing on a legacy (as in crops planted from year to year)
- An alternative learning environment for students
- A calming place for kids to connect with nature
- A resource to last for generations

The committee further agreed that the classroom design process itself should be educational for students, and that the materials and processes should be as sustainable and low-footprint as possible (potentially including features such as energy efficiency, storm water management/rain gardens, live roofs, etc.)

Jen Troke has volunteered to collect fundraising possibilities; please let her know if you'd like to help, or if you know of possible foundations, grants, donors, or other sources of funding – monetary or in-kind – we might consider.

Finally, the group agreed to send around notices when one or more members are planning to visit a local outdoor classroom at another school or elsewhere, so that others may join the trip.