

Outdoor Classroom Committee Meeting Notes
April 30, 2012

Meeting attendees: Amy Kenney, Cathy Hilton-Russo, Annemarie Ewing, Mi Ae Kim, Elise Stigliano, Debbie Boger

1. Reviewing data collected from teacher meetings and planning charette

Amy Kenney reviewed the data collected from participants at the Feb. 28 charette. The charette planning group had tabulated and numerically ranked the classroom features most often mentioned as priorities by design “teams” at the charette, with birdhouses, compost bins and a pond or water feature topping the chart as highest priorities. You can see a full summary of the charette and the numeric data on the OC website at

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/sligocreekes/aboutus/outdoorclassroom.aspx>

Debbie Boger gave short summaries of the meetings that have occurred with SSIMS and SCES teachers. Committee members have met with SCES teachers from grades K-3 and all of the SSIMS grade-level departments to date. All of these meetings have been important for beginning conversations with the schools’ staff, and they have yielded good insights into teachers’ preferences. Full notes and common themes from these meetings will be posted shortly on the OC website listed above.

In the meantime, commonly-raised themes from the SCES teacher meetings to date include:

- Teachers are excited about the possibility of an Outdoor Classroom; they can see many curriculum linkages
- Teachers would need substantial support to be able to make use of the outdoor classroom in their current curriculum
- Teachers liked the idea of an edible garden
- Teachers are concerned that it is too difficult to access the courtyard
- Need follow-up survey

Commonly-raised themes from the SSIMS teachers include:

- Outdoor Classroom Management and Access – will access be sufficient and timely?
- We Should Use Places in Addition to the Interior Courtyard
- Lots of Good Opportunities to Use Outdoor Spaces
- All the World Needs a Stage
- Include Some All-weather Space
- Need Follow-up Survey

2. Follow-up to get additional information from teachers, parents, and students

Follow-up with Teachers: Most teachers thought that a survey monkey or paper survey distributed by the principals would be an efficient way to get deeper, more considered preferences and priorities from the teachers. Many suggested that teaching teams could use meeting times to discuss their priorities for the outdoor classroom. A group consisting of Amy Kenney, Elise Stigliano, Mi Ae Kim and Debbie Boger will develop a survey monkey, circulate it to the full committee for comments, and aim to have the survey available to teachers for their consideration and responses during the last month of school. We

would also like to provide a key to the outdoor classroom to all SCES teachers if possible (and SSIMS teachers if needed?).

VOLUNTEER NEED: HELP THIS TEAM DEVELOP, REVIEW AND DISTRIBUTE THE SURVEY MONKEY/SURVEY TO TEACHERS AT SSIMS AND SCES

Follow-up with parents: the survey monkey will be available online (at our website listed above) for parents to contribute additional thoughts and suggestions. We will advertise the availability of this survey throughout school.

VOLUNTEER NEED: HELP GET THE WORD OUT TO PARENTS ABOUT THE AVAILABILITY OF THIS SURVEY

Follow-up with students: We would like to hold an ice-cream or popsicle party in the courtyard during the last two weeks of school for SCES students to visit the courtyard, have a tour, and eat ice cream! Many have never been in the space and this is a great way to introduce them and get them excited about it. During the popsicle party, we could have the students put handprints on a banner that says "Future Home of the Salamander Schoolyard – All Hands In (or something like that)." We may also explore the idea of a student "charette" one Thursday night before the end of school. We will also re-raise the question with teachers of how best to involve students.

VOLUNTEER NEEDS: HELP PLAN THE POPSICLE/ICE CREAM PARTY IN THE COURTYARD OR PUT TOGETHER A BANNER FOR THEIR HANDPRINTS. EXPLORE A POTENTIAL THURSDAY NIGHT "CHARETTE" FOR SCES (AND SSIMS?) STUDENTS

3. Design work and next steps, project phasing: what can be accomplished in the remainder of this school year and during the summer?

The group discussed the following timeline:

May – June 2012: Collect additional information from teachers, parents, and students about what they'd like to see/do/prioritize in an outdoor classroom (see activities above)

June – August 2012: Meet with volunteer landscape architects/designers to develop a draft master design for the outdoor classroom. Have a "bubble zone design" or something more developed for rolling out in September

September/October 2012: Roll out the draft master plan during a kickoff week at both schools, potentially including handing out information about the outdoor classroom at Back-to-School Night(s)

VOLUNTEER NEED: BE PART OF A CORE TEAM THAT WILL MEET WITH THE LANDSCAPE DESIGNERS/ARCHITECTS OVER THE SUMMERTIME TO REVIEW DESIGN PLANS

4. Website Information and Design

Amy Kenney and one other person (tentative) have volunteered to lead the effort to make our web presence on SCES's website as informative, efficient and attractive as possible.

VOLUNTEER NEED: IF YOU'D LIKE TO HELP WITH THE WEBSITE IN ANY WAY, PLEASE CONTACT AMY KENNEY DIRECTLY AT Kenney.amy@gmail.com.