

METRO REGIONAL PARKS AND GREENSPACES GREENSPACES ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROJECTS

Final Report Summary

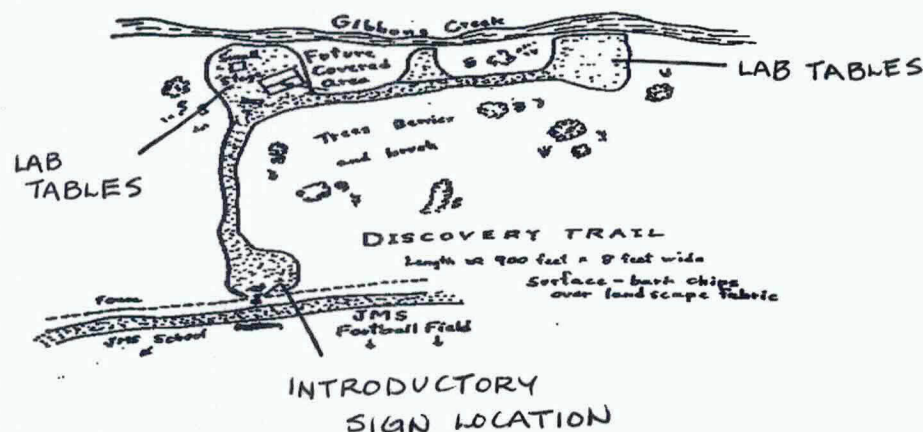
The J.E.E.P. project began in the fall of 1993. Over the last five years, the Jemtegaard Environmental Education Project has involved students, parents, local community patrons, and businesses in an extensive project that has included: 1) construction of an outdoor amphitheater, 2) formation of a 900 foot discovery trail, 3) development of on-site salmon tanks with aligned science curriculum, 4) development of the Gibbons Creek riparian zone restoration project, and 5) purchasing of technology equipment that will support curriculum and advertising efforts.

The Metro Regional Parks and Greenspaces grant was applied to three areas of need within the J.E.E.P. Discovery Nature Trail Project. These areas included: 1) Construction of picnic tables to provide seating for two lab classrooms on the Discovery Trail site, 2) construction of an introductory sign at the head of the Discovery Trail, and 3) reintroduction of native vegetation to assist in improving the riparian zone around Gibbons Creek which runs along 300 feet of the Discovery Trail path.

All three areas were successfully addressed with the funding matched by the Metro Regional Parks and Greenspaces grant. Outdoor classrooms are in place at the front and end areas of the creek (see diagram below). These areas are equipped with wooden picnic tables that were built by JMS students in the spring of 1997.

Student work parties with the help of the Washougal School District Maintenance Department successfully cleared back invasive plant species during the spring of 1997 (mostly blackberries and nettles.) This has allowed students to plant over 200 native species of trees and shrubs along the trail and creek bank during the spring of 1998.

The Discovery Trail is now marked by an entrance sign that stands over 8 feet tall (see diagram below). The sign was constructed by students during the fall of 1997 in the Jemtegaardshop program and was installed through volunteer work party efforts.



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Final Report Evaluation

J.E.E.P. has been an important aspect of the Jemtegaard school community for many years. Yet, it is and always will be a work in progress. The accomplishments that were made through our partnership with Metro Regional Parks and Greenspaces have added great value to the Discovery Trail. The positive aspects of the Metro related projects were many.

The picnic lab tables and the introductory sign were student produced. This level of student involvement is by far the greatest aspect of the project. Students at Jemtegaard have ownership in the trail and the site has become an important part of the school campus.

The clearing and planting of the arboretum was a result of student, parent, and staff efforts. We found that advertising "Work Parties" was a great way to assemble a work force that was focused and effective. Student Council and the Parent Booster Club were targets for the work parties but it was open to all students and many kids showed up to help. Having teachers, students, and parents working side-by-side was an incredible positive experience for all involved. Having a lunch with soft drinks donated to us by local community businesses also helped our work parties be successful.

We also found that holding staff and school board meetings at the trail site was a great way to get more people involved in and aware of the project. Students love to show off their work and the beautiful trail area sells itself in terms of gaining support.

The J.E.E.P. project is becoming more and more an integrated part of our science curriculum and many science classes had a part this last year in clearing and planting. We also utilized the school's service learning days to focus on the the Discovery Trail Project.

Another piece that worked for us this last year with the Metro related projects was our purchasing of native plants from Mabry Nursery. This was a good faith effort that was subcontracted out through Offender Industries. The work crew from Mabry is provided by inmates from local correctional institutes. We were very pleased with the items purchased from them and would suggest Mabry Nursery to other groups.

Of course, every project has its ups and downs. Some of the challenges that we faced this last year with Metro related projects was planning around the weather. Work parties on rainy days were not as well attended as nice, sunny days. The issue of trail security was something we had to consider. It meant locking the gates with a pad lock, making it more complicated for teachers to use the trail without scheduling to get a key. We fixed this problem by providing a pad lock that fit each teacher's school gate key.

Overall, we are very pleased with the way that J.E.E.P. has progressed through our partnership with Metro Regional Parks and Greenspaces. We look forward to crossing paths with you in the future.