

GRESHAM-BARLOW SCHOOL DISTRICT

**SCHOOLYARD HABITAT PROJECT**

**2002 METROPOLITAN GREENSPACES PROGRAM  
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION GRANT**

**Grant #924574**

**Final Report**

The intent of the Schoolyard Habitat Project was to support and strengthen environmental education in the Gresham-Barlow School District, particularly as the central focus of the sixth grade science curriculum. The mission of environmental teams at each middle school site is to support hands-on environmental education experiences for students using living laboratories located on or near school campuses. The Schoolyard Habitat Project intends to create and sustain a habitat-based learning site while preserving an existing watershed or greenspace on school grounds. It is the goal of the project to inspire middle school students to learn principles of habitat ecology and methods of habitat conservation. The vision is to eventually sustain and develop schoolyard habitats at the five GBSD middle school sites by mobilizing students, teachers, administrators, custodial workers, parents, and the community.

**Summary of Grant Activities**

On February 21-23 2003, three Gresham-Barlow Middle Schools were represented by five teachers at the Wildlife Stewards Training in Bend Oregon, funded by the grant. The participants commented positively about the valuable resources, which described how to establish a schoolyard habitat. In addition to the excellent speakers, the educators returned to their schools with large binders containing lots of practical tips to lay the groundwork for an environmental education site at their own schools as well as curriculum ideas in environmental education.

After an environmental education team was established at Dexter McCarty and West Orient Middle Schools, which were designated as pilot schools for the project, a timeline was established to plan and develop a schoolyard habitat site at each school.

Dexter McCarty began creating an onsite habitat in the spring of 2003. West Orient Middle School began their project in the winter of 2004. Using Metro Greenspaces grant funding, the middle school broke ground through the assistance of staff, students, and parent volunteers.

In the first phase, which began in February of 2003, a science teacher from West Orient, two parents, and five students prepared the ground for a tool shed slab. Lumber from grant money will be used in the next few weeks to erect the walls.

In the second phase, three raised beds were constructed in April of 2003 using lumber purchased with grant money. A significant percentage of the sixth grade classes contributed their efforts to the project through the course of a school day. Grant money also funded the cost of three cubic yards of high quality soil mix to fill each bed. In addition, outdoor thermometers, a soil testing kit, and microscope were purchased with Metro Grant money.

In the third phase, native plants will be planted in the beds and a pathway will be constructed for easy access to the beds in any kind of weather.

### **Evaluation**

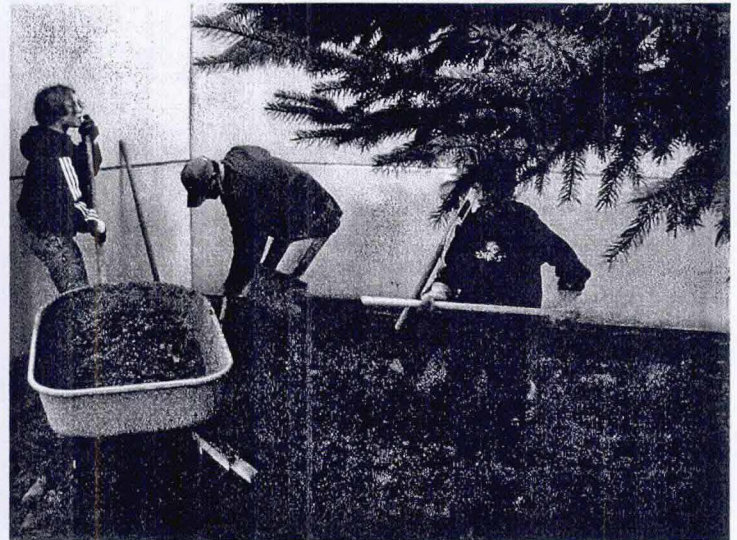
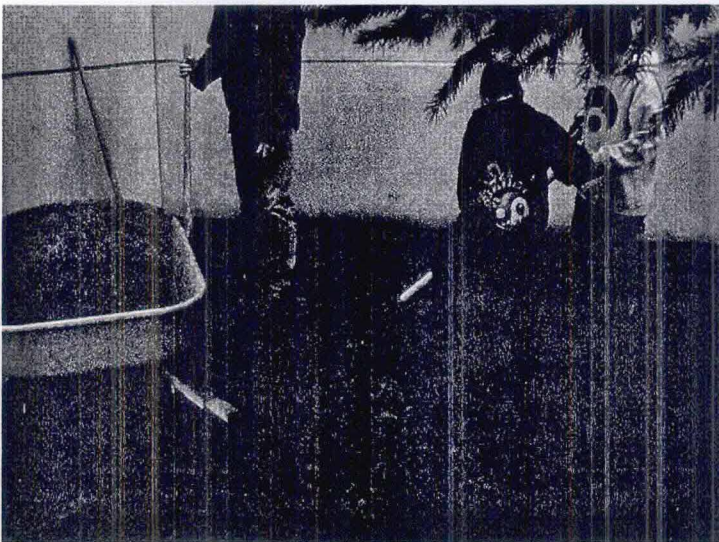
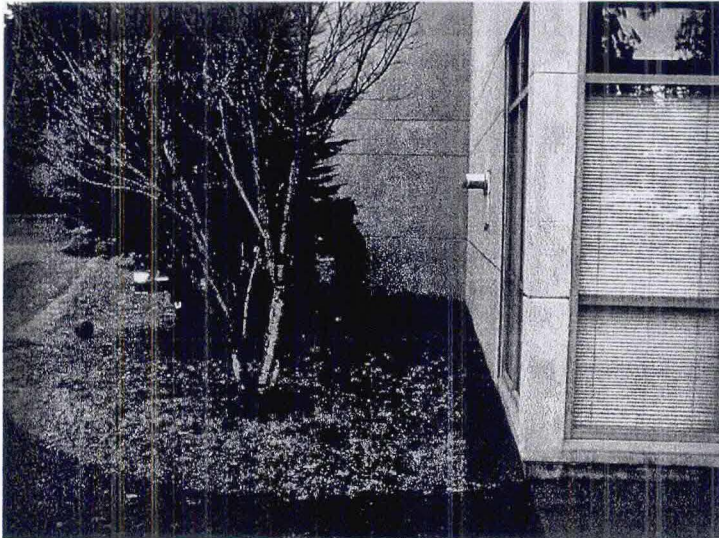
The Schoolyard Habitat Project has been and will continue to be an integral component of the Environmental Education Program at West Orient and Dexter McCarty Schools. The initial phases have been accomplished as planned and, surprisingly, very smoothly. The students are excited and are taking great pride in knowing that they are responsible for starting an on-site schoolyard habitat. They realize that we have a long way to go and that each successive sixth grade class will be able to benefit from what has already been established and build upon the site for future learning opportunities. The schoolyard habitat progress has been documented in the monthly school newsletter. Consequently, many families have expressed an interest to help with the project. Several local nurseries have likewise expressed an interest in donating native plants, trees, and shrubs. One family recently donated a lovely vine maple from their nursery to dedicate the new schoolyard habitat and in honor of Arbor Day, 2004.

accomplishing large projects. If our middle school had started earlier in the timeframe of the grant period, perhaps more of our original vision could have been accomplished.

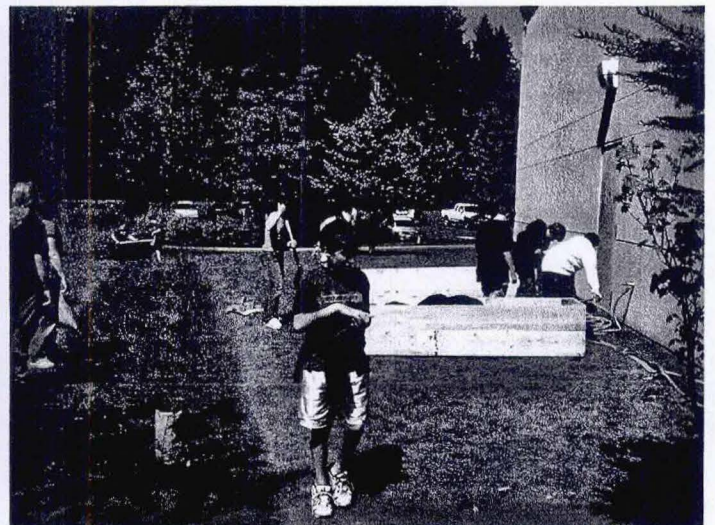
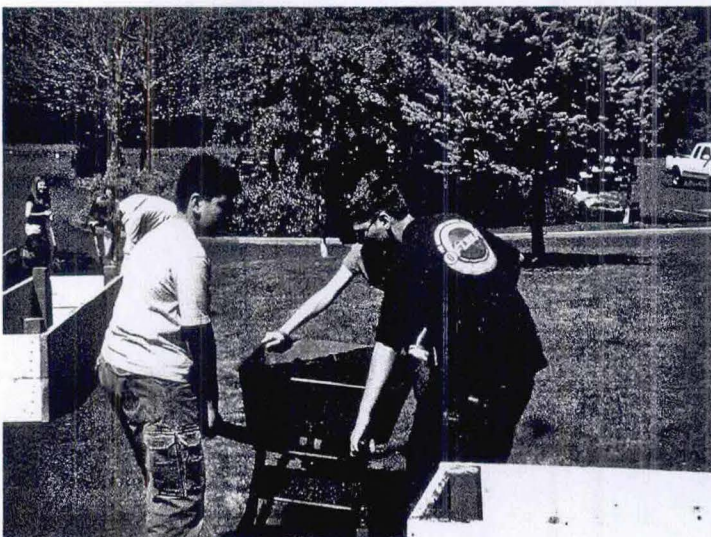
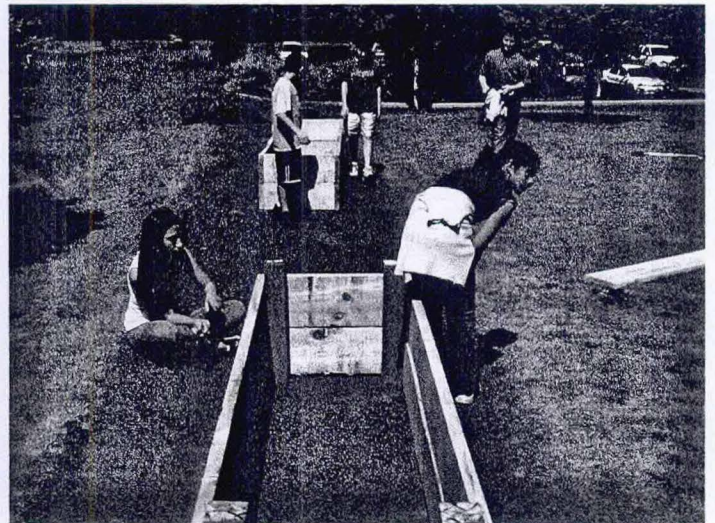
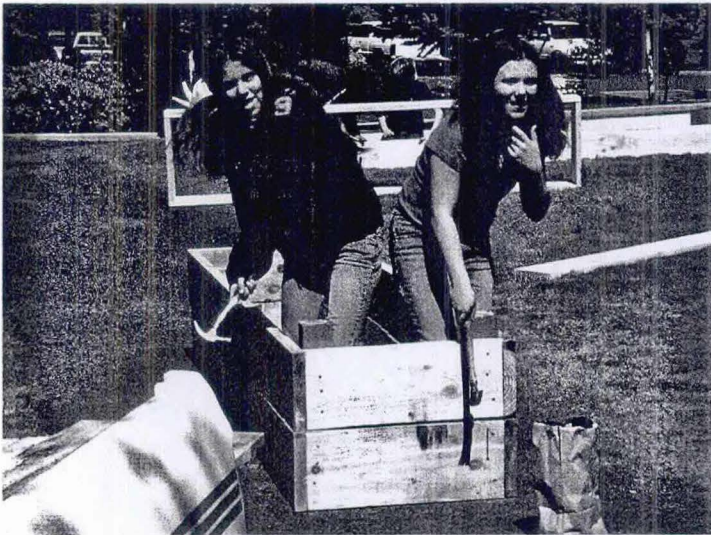
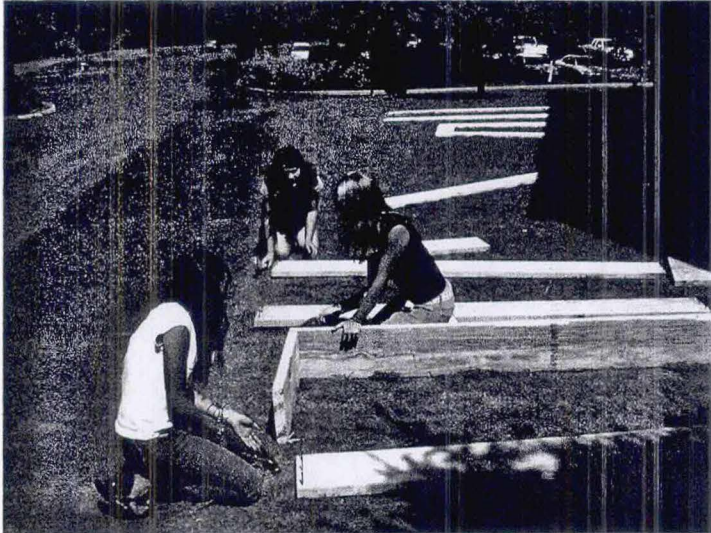
West Orient and Dexter McCarty Middle Schools are eager to continue their projects in the fall. The science staff will be meeting to design curriculum around the habitat. Recently, the art teacher, inspired by the schoolyard habitat project, has decided to apply for a grant to fund the creation of a mural on an environmental theme.

The Metro Greenspaces Grant has enabled each of these schools to jumpstart their environmental education program with the hope of stimulating the same kind of enthusiasm in the other middle schools within the Gresham-Barlow School District.

# Tool Shed Slab Preparation



# Raised Bed Construction



# Planting A Vine Maple Tree

