

project WEB

Spring
2011

Connecting Projects WILD, WET and Learning Tree in New Hampshire

New Hampshire Schools Go Green

Let's not let being "green" just be a passing fad! Today there are more and more opportunities for schools and students to incorporate their learning into complex, real-world environmental issues like waste reduction, energy efficiency and water conservation. Throughout the state, New Hampshire students and teachers are being empowered to make changes to their

ecological footprint and show appreciation for this beautiful place that we call home. Don't let Earth Day be the only time of the year to focus on our impact on the environment. This issue of *Project WEB* is devoted to giving you ideas and resources to help your school "go green" all year long!



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Before we can teach children, we have to give them reason for learning: the reason being to become part of the world; thinking of it together rather than in pieces.

- Aldo Leopold



PLT GreenSchools! Investigations provide opportunities for students to become "green" leaders at their school.

PLT's GreenSchools! Program Comes to Nashua

By NHPLT Staff

Many people shudder when they hear the term "audit," but not the Green Team at Bicentennial Elementary School in Nashua. The Green Team, comprised of 4th and 5th grade students, has completed three audits from Project Learning Tree's GreenSchools! program. These audit "investigations" assess the school's impact on the environment. Students compiled and analyzed data for a water

audit, an energy audit and a waste audit. Armed with their results, the team worked with the adults in the school community to make simple and significant changes to the school's ecological footprint.

The water audit led to a "Back2Tap" campaign. The Green Team now sells aluminum water bottles to students and staff to reduce the use of plastic throw-aways. The energy audit prompted the instal-

GREEN SCHOOL continued on page 2



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lation of “Hit the Switch” stickers on all light switches and complemented the new solar-powered crosswalk signs purchased through the Safe Routes to Schools program. Students are trying to help the school save energy by reminding classrooms to turn their lights off. They are doing this creatively by dressing up as “Energy Vampires” and leaving notes on boards reminding students and teachers that they are “sucking the energy out of the school.” They have also decided to add a positive approach by having “Energy Angels” who give love notes to those rooms that remember to turn the lights off!

The waste audit inspired a plastic and aluminum recycling program, the first for Nashua’s public schools! This recycling program is all student-run, with students meeting weekly to collect and sort the recyclables. The waste audit also prompted interest in starting a composting program, with the hope that students and staff will

compost their leftover fruits and vegetables at lunch.

Green Team members have already begun educating school members during their lunches about this new program and designed a cafeteria bulletin board to show what can and cannot be deposited in their new tumbling composting bins. When ready, the compost will be sifted and prepared for use in the schools’ outdoor classroom.

Nashua’s Bicentennial Elementary School is a leader as a “green school,” and the student-run Green Team deserves much



On patrol – energy angel and energy vampire.

credit. This student club meets weekly during recess with 5th grade teacher Tanya Ackerman. When asked why they give up their recess to be a part of the Green Team, students say:

“We want to help the environment.”

“It feels good to be doing something to save energy.”

“I was inspired by the time I spend outside with my Dad.”

“I want to save money for the school.”

“The environment is more important than recess.”

According to Langille, the positive impact on the school community now cultivates the initiative’s sustainability. Students see themselves as educated and responsible citizens and stewards of our earth. They know through direct involvement that their attention and actions make a difference in their world. Results like those should pass any audit!



Recognizing New Hampshire School’s “Green” Efforts

Besides the many schools mentioned in this issue, there are many other New Hampshire schools that have been cultivating “green” ideas at the school and district level. Way to go!

- **Newmarket Elementary School** grades PreK-5 are involved in keeping 208 yards of mixed material out of the landfill/year with a \$208 savings/month. Contact Paula Smart.
- **Spaulding High School** in Rochester reduced its paper use in 2009-2010 by 28.5%. Ask us how. Contact Pat Gaudet and the Student Environmental Action Coalition.
- At **Nottingham School**, the Earth Turners Garden Club (grades K-6) continues to reinvigorate the garden beds, seeding, planting a new season of crops, composting, water harvesting. Contact Michelle Carvalho.
- **Portsmouth School District** is working to create a safe and healthy environment while reducing consumption of resources and landfill space. The district has saved \$544,568 in energy costs since 2006. Contact Ken Linchey.
- **Portsmouth High School’s ECO Club** collects recycling, limits light usage, is building a rain garden, composting, running a road race for solar panels. Contact Dee Barrett.
- **Barnard School**, South Hampton: Grades K-8 have created a 7,000 square foot garden that produces produce for us and our community, and classes have vermicompost bins. Contact Chris Asbell.
- **Rye Junior High School**: Grades 6 - 8 are outside, planning, planting, nurturing, harvesting, composting, creating and learning in a 24-foot x 56-foot garden. <http://ryejrhigh.org/GardenMain.htm>
- **Lyme Elementary School**, grades K-8 has solar panels with an interactive web link and has recently implemented composting.
- **The Student Conservation Association New Hampshire Parks Americorps**, based at Bear Brook State Park in Allentown, has been working with a number of New Hampshire schools in their “greening” process:
 - **Allenstown Elementary**: 4th graders are learning about and expanding existing pollinator gardens.
 - **Beech Street Elementary**, Manchester: 4th graders created an outdoor walkway demonstrating N.H. food webs.
 - **Gossler Park Elementary**, Manchester: 4th graders expanded gardens in their outdoor classroom.
 - **Hallsville Elementary**, Manchester: 4th and 5th graders developed bird habitat in their schoolyard .
 - **Highland Goffe’s Falls Elementary**, Manchester: 4th and 5th graders are increasing bird and pollinator habitat in their outdoor classroom.
 - **Jewett Elementary**, Manchester: 4th graders are painting nature-based games on the playground.
 - **McDonough Elementary**, Manchester: 4th graders added benches and plants to outdoor spaces.
 - **Smyth Road Elementary**, Manchester: 4th graders are creating an interactive nature-themed outdoor learning center.
 - **Webster Elementary**, Manchester: 4th graders created a rock garden outside of the school.
 - **Weston Elementary**, Manchester: 4th graders installed bird baths near existing gardens.

Spotlight on...

Northeast Resource Recovery Association

Providing recycling support to help N.H. schools go green

Are you tapping your fingers wondering how to start or improve your school recycling program? Look no further! The School Recycling CLUB of the Northeast Resource Recovery Association, in partnership with New Hampshire the Beautiful, can help.

The School Recycling CLUB offers a free on-site recycling inventory to help take your recycling program to the next level. The inventory visit asks about current practices, recycling habits, environmental education and more. Afterwards, your school is provided with a comprehensive, customized report with simple steps to start or make your recycling program even better.

Your recycling program can be easy. The goal is to get key stakeholders involved, including school administrators and town transfer station officials. The more help you can gather, the better your program will be.

The Northeast Resource Recovery Association also holds a one-day, all-you-need-to-know School Recycling Conference; this year it's on Tuesday, June 7, 2011, at the



Students sort paper for recycling at the North Walpole School recycling shed.

Radisson Hotel/Center of New Hampshire in Manchester. For information about the conference, go to www.nrra.net/conference/info.

Here's what some members of the School Recycling Club have been up to:

- Two students from Salem High School started a recycling program two years ago. Now, as juniors, they lead the

school's recycling effort and make "recycled" crafts.

- North Walpole has turned their shed into a recycling consolidation point. Outfitted with bins and colorful signs, the center makes sorting their recycling easy.

- With the support of a New Hampshire the Beautiful grant, New Boston Central School has purchased a box truck to haul their recyclables. Once or twice a week, staff from the local transfer station use the truck to pick up the school's recycled materials and deliver the material to the transfer station (both solid waste and recyclables). The recyclable material is

weighed, processed and given credit when shipped with the rest of the New Boston recyclables. To date, the school has received revenue of \$486.

Ready to get started? Contact the Northeast Resource Recovery Association today to set up a free base-line inventory. Call 603-736-4401, ext. 17; email theclub@nrra.net; or visit www.schoolrecycling.net.



Activities Related to Articles in this Issue

Project WET suggests:

In *Water Meter*, students become aware of their daily use of water by constructing a "water meter" to keep track of their water use.

Common Water allows students to use a simulation to understand that water is a shared resource, that multiple users can affect water quality and quantity, and that water must be managed to provide water for all water users.

Students conduct a survey to determine what the community thinks and feels about an important water resource issue in *What's Happening?*

Project WILD suggests:

In *Playing Lightly on the Earth*, K-4 students look for evidence of games that harm the environment and then play games with a benign effect on the earth.

Middle school students collect and evaluate litter in the activity *Litter We Know*, then make collages of their finds.

In the activity *Enviro-Ethics*, middle school students distinguish between actions that are harmful and beneficial to the environment, then develop a personal code of ethics to follow.

Project Learning Tree suggests:

In the Driver's Seat is an activity that has students keep a log of their family's transportation and explore fuel conservation and energy efficiency through simulating traveling using different vehicles.

Students explore the pros and cons of different packaging strategies in *A Peek at Packaging*.

In *Plant a Tree*, students express their appreciation of trees by planning and carrying out their own tree-planting project.

Pittsfield Elementary Earth Day Event



Pittsfield Elementary School 4th grade students help plant a tree at their 2010 Earth Day celebration. The event was honored as the Northeast Resource Recovery Association's 2010 "Best Earth Day Event."

Going Green at School

by Sherry Godlewski, NHDES
Environmental Program Manager

With all the buzz about “Being Green,” when asked what they can do to help reduce pollution or help the environment, many kids will say “Go green.” Do they really know what this means? They may have some ideas, and we can help them put their ideas into action. Often we focus on Earth Day or Earth Week. Instead of taking one day or even one week to focus on “going green,” taking care of the environment can be a continuous lesson all year long in all subjects including math, reading, science, social studies and the arts. Here are some ideas for easy ways to start.

Waste Reduction: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle (the 3 R’s): On average K-8 students use 99 pounds of paper per student per year. Every ton (2,000 pounds) of paper recycled saves 17 trees. Reduce the amount of paper used in your classroom. Use both sides of paper when writing and drawing. Keep a scrap paper box for paper that still has a clean side and use it to write on or print from the printer. Once both sides of the paper have been used, recycle it! You can also use scrap paper for art projects.

Try Trash Free Lunches: Teach your students to pack a “trash-free” lunch. Bring lunch in a reusable bag. Use a reusable water bottle for milk or juice. Instead of a paper napkin, students can pack a washcloth or cloth napkin. Fresh fruits and homemade foods like sandwiches are healthier alternatives to the prepackaged foods and snacks. Encourage packing lunches and snacks in plastic containers that can be washed out and reused for sandwiches, carrot sticks, and even special treats, like chips! Have students create a display that compares the economic, health and environmental costs of a waste-free lunch vs. other types, and show an example of a waste-free lunch and a waste-full lunch. This can be incorporated into lessons including math calculations and graphing, reading nutritional labels, price comparisons and waste disposal.

Turn It Off: Turning off electronics and lights are two of the most important things a student can learn to do. Encourage your students to turn off the lights whenever they leave a room. Also



encourage your students to turn off and unplug electronics (computers, TVs, iPods, etc.) when they are not in use. You can get a “Cut the Carbon Kit” from your local New Hampshire library. These kits include Kill-a-Watt counters and worksheets to determine the amount of electricity and money that can be saved by unplugging and turning things off.

Introduce the concept of “phantom energy” to students. Phantom energy is the

energy that is used when we leave something plugged in when we aren’t actually using it. This includes things like leaving the electric charger plugged into the wall when you are not charging your cell phone. Even a computer in “sleep mode” uses phantom energy. A Kill-a-Watt meter could be a fun experiment to check things in the classroom and a great homework assignment for kids to try at home and help educate their parents. For more information, contact Sherry Godlewski at 603-271-6801 or sherry.godlewski@des.nh.gov.



Healthy Schools Partnership Encourages “Clean Air Zones”

by Jessica Morton, NHDES
Air Resources Division

It’s always a good time to think about keeping the air quality in and around schools clean and healthy to breathe. One way to do that is to reduce vehicle idling by establishing “Clean Air Zones.” This means that all drivers – bus drivers and parents – should be directed to turn off engines as soon as they arrive in the schoolyard, especially when waiting for passengers to board.

When cars and school buses idle, they release unhealthy exhaust fumes that have been linked to asthma and lung cancer. Children are more susceptible to exhaust pollution because their lungs are still developing and they breathe at a faster rate than adults. Diesel exhaust from school buses is particularly harm-

55,800 . . . the number of school absence days due to asthma each year in New Hampshire.

ful and can accumulate on and around buses, posing a health risk to drivers and children. When school buses, cars and delivery trucks idle in schoolyards, the exhaust can also pollute the air inside school buildings, posing a health risk to children and teachers throughout the day.

The N.H. Partners for Healthy Schools (NHPHS) is a partnership of several state-wide organizations, including

Please Turn
Engine Off



Thank You!

N.H. Department of Transportation
N.H. Department of Environmental Services

the N.H. Department of Environmental Services, advocating for better, healthier environments in schools, including indoor and outdoor air quality. NHPHS stresses to school administrators and educators that a proactive approach to managing school air quality will not only have a significant positive impact on a child’s health and learning ability, but will save time and money by minimizing absenteeism, breakdowns, energy use, liability and need for crisis intervention. NHPHS encourages school officials to establish Clean Air Zones as an easy, cost-effective way to improve air quality in and around their schools, and provides ideas, strategies and resources to help get them started.

For more information, please visit www.nhhealthyschoolenvironments.org or contact Jessica Morton at (603) 271-1390 or Jessica.Morton@des.nh.gov.

Remember the rule – No Idling at School!



“25-Mile” Lunch Program at the Henniker Community School

By Marty Davis, RD, LD
Foodservice Director

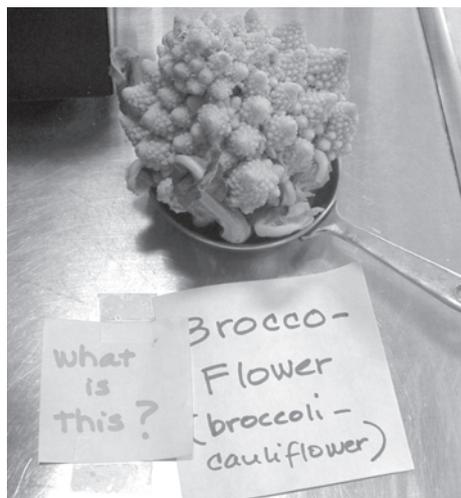
Being a lunch lady is, in my opinion, a great job. At the Henniker Community School, our kitchen strives to prepare and serve foods that are “kid friendly” and tasty. As students come through the breakfast and lunch lines, there are so many opportunities for teachable moments about food and nutrition! Our foodservice staff is committed to helping students, staff and visitors understand where their food comes from, how delicious and nutritious local foods are, and why it’s important to compost, recycle, and support our N.H. farmers and producers.

In September 2010, we celebrated local foods with a 25-Mile Lunch. The meal featured brunch foods all sourced within a 25-mile radius of Henniker. Eggs for scrambling were laid by the chickens at the Buxton Farm in Weare. Sausage patties were hand-formed from Henniker’s Porkside Farms’ traditional breakfast sausage meat. Davison Farms of Henniker grew the potatoes for roasting (there’s nothing like a really fresh potato!). Apples from French Pond Orchards in Henniker provided the fruit for our school-made applesauce and apple bread pudding. Intervale Sugar House in Henniker produced the maple syrup that was drizzled over the bread pudding with sap gathered from local trees, including some of the author’s sugar maples. Pictures of our farmers with their products were posted in the kitchen and many students recognized them.

While students enjoyed their local lunch, a volunteer from the community demonstrated how apple cider is made. He set up his cider press in the cafeteria and all students had a chance to turn the press and see the juice squeeze out of the crushed apples. Small cups of commercial N.H. apple cider were available for tasting (due to food safety concerns, unpasteurized cider cannot be served in schools).

Another practice we use on the lunch line to teach students and staff about local foods is our “Question of the Week.” As foodservice director, I am always on the lookout for foods that are locally grown and somewhat unusual to be identified or

explored. Fruits and vegetables are common picks; asparagus, tomatillos in their papery husks, purple cauliflower, white eggplants, autumn gourds and cranberries are some examples. I choose foods that are in season, so that students might be able to spot them in the markets or their gardens. At the end of the week, we offer the students a taste of the food. By exposing students to new foods and challenging them with a question, we are able to engage them in learning about



A “Question of the week”... broccoflower, also known as Romanesco broccoli.



PHOTOS COURTESY HENNIKER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Cider pressing demonstration adds a local touch.

local foods, trying new foods, and making nutrition connections.

The N.H. Farm to School Program has been a wonderful resource for providing information and source of local producers. We feel fortunate to have a school board that is supportive of our initiative. This year, we are pursuing more local foods to incorporate into our everyday menus with the goal of building green and healthy eating habits in our school community.



Spring 2011 WEB Resources

- Project Learning Tree’s GreenSchools! Program: www.pltgreenschools.org
- NH Healthy Schools: www.nhhealthyschoolenvironments.org
- N.H. Energy Smart Schools Program: www.nhschoolbenchmarking.com
- Waste paper lesson: <http://www.monroecounty.gov/Image/LESSON14.pdf>
- EPA New England K-12 Schools: www.epa.gov/nelschools
- EPA Kids Site for Climate Change, “Calculate Your Impact”: www.epa.gov/climatechange/kids/calc/index.html
- EPA Healthy School Environment Resources: <http://cfpub.epa.gov/schools/index.cfm>
- Energy Answers Program: 1-877-398-4769. <http://extension.unh.edu/Energy/Energy.html>
- US Green Building Council LEED for Schools page: www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=1586



- Eco-Schools USA (above): www.ecoschoolsusa.org

Turning Garbage to Gold

by Ruth Smith, State Coordinator for N.H. Agriculture in the Classroom

Composting food waste is one more way for schools to be “green.” The benefits of composting include reducing waste that would be sent to a landfill or incinerator and producing a product that enhances soil health and plant growth. Schools also benefit because composting is a wonderful teaching tool addressing topics such as life cycles, soil chemistry and environmental stewardship.

Composting is basically enhanced decomposition. It is the simple act of helping organic matter break down into rich fertilizer that can be added to gardens, landscaping or indoor plants. The key to successful composting is to have the right balance of carbon, nitrogen, moisture and air. Food waste, including fruit cores and peels, uneaten food, coffee grounds, egg shells and fresh grass clippings, count for nitrogen. Carbon comes from leaves, sawdust and shredded paper. Achieve a diverse mixture by layering nitrogen (greens) and carbon (browns) in a bin. This also enables the browns to



PHOTO COURTESY OF GILMANTON SCHOOL

Amanda Cormier, 3rd grade teacher at Gilmanton School, really gets into her work as she teaches her students about composting.

cover the food scraps, which, if left exposed, can attract flies, bees or other critters. A compost pile with the right balance should not smell bad. Turning it periodically will reduce smells and speed decomposition. The finished product should be a dark, crumbly, earthy-smelling material, what gardeners call “black gold.”

Composting at school can be a challenge, but plenty of places have made it work. Support from the administration and facilities staff is important. This may require some education to help dispel the myth that compost bins are “nasty.” The Gilmanton School has started small by collecting the waste from students’ snacks. Each class has a coffee can where snack leftovers are deposited. Students take turns emptying the cans into the outside bins. The bins are simply and inexpensively constructed using wooden pallets.

Other schools, such as the South Meadow School (SMS) in Peterborough, compost waste from their cafeteria. Dan Brekenridge from SMS describes their system: “We have a huge Geo tub with a motorized auger that makes composting the amount we compost easier than hand turning. We have used our compost in our raised beds.” Fresh greens from the school gardens, fertilized by their

compost, are served in school lunches, thus creating a complete circle.

Another simple way to compost in school is with indoor worm bins. Classroom bins are neat, unobtrusive and handy for educational purposes. These are especially fun for younger children, but provide learning and recycling opportunities for all.

One of the biggest challenges is educating the school community about what should and should not go into the compost bins. When creating school systems, it is best to avoid meats, dairy products and animal manures. Helping the kids to understand that it is still better to eat the food than waste it is also important. But at least when tossed, food is composted and can be recycled into something really valuable.

To address the needs of schools interested in composting and gardening, a New Hampshire School Garden Network is being formed. The network is being coordinated by UNH Cooperative Extension, N.H. Farm to School and N.H. Agriculture in the Classroom. If you would like to share your experience, learn from others and be part of this growing network, or have questions about school composting and gardening, contact Ruth Smith at nhaitc@nhfarmbureau.org.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Watershed Ecology Institute

July 25 - 29 and August 1- 5 (10 days) at Plymouth Regional High School. This hands-on 10-day course prepares teachers to take advantage of the outdoor classroom and meet many of the state science curriculum frameworks. Science educators will gain an understanding of watershed ecology and receive a collection of outdoor and classroom activities/study guides that tie together the watershed concept for their students. Topics include wetland ecology, stream study and lake ecology, groundwater, plant communities, forest ecology, estuarine and marine ecology and aquatic resource management. Each day includes classroom and field components. Credit optional (2). Teaching in-service credit also available. For registration brochure go to www.wildnh.com/Education/ed_watershed_programs.htm. Co-sponsored by the N.H. Fish and Game Department and UNH Cooperative Extension.



ON THE

H.O.M.E.
 FRONT

Follow a Child
 into the Garden:
 "Project Outdoors" at Mt.
 Lebanon Elementary School

by Marilyn Wyzga

The Seed: It started with flowers.

Each schoolyard habitat project is sparked by a different inspiration. Its evolution reflects the community culture, the human resources on hand, and, of course, the site. This is the story of one school's experience.

In 1999, students and teachers at Mt. Lebanon Elementary (Lebanon, NH) grew flower bulbs as a community service to raise money for the Heiffer Foundation. The teachers, seeing how the kids loved digging in the dirt, began to create curriculum connections to the garden. Over 10 years, various people used the garden space to grow flowers and vegetables. Today, there is a thriving vegetable garden, a Healthy Snacks program, a wildlife habitat and an outdoor classroom area full of native plants and places to sit, enjoy and play in nature.

Germination: Staff development opportunities and inspirations

Mt. Lebanon had several components already in place that got the staff excited about being outdoors. The school grounds borders a woodland, so "Tree Circle" became the place to encourage kids to play with trees and branches and for the art teacher to inspire her students' creative pursuits. When the staff gave some thought to what recess should look like, they decided to use the outdoors more and provide the children a different environment than the playground.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MT. LEBANON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Third graders plant wild blueberry, while Rickey Poor digs in a witch hazel that fellow teachers purchased to celebrate her retirement.

Several events occurred next to bring energy together: a teacher institute, a Project HOME workshop and the 2007 "Leave No Child Inside" Forum.

In the summer of 2006, four Mt. Lebanon teachers attended the N.H. Education and Environment Team (NHEET) summer institute, "Curriculum Connections through Schoolyard Investigations." Inspired by the potential of their schoolyard for learning, and interested in grounding their institute experience in the schoolyard, they organized a Project HOME: Homes for Wildlife in the Schoolyard workshop. A designer-in-residence program followed, which brought the children directly into designing the schoolyard habitat and installing the first phase of the plan.

Roots Down, Leaves Up: Gathering ideas and finding focus

When they looked at the "Big Picture" view of the whole school campus, they saw several areas to work with around the school grounds; visioning, dreaming and planning encompassed them all. Teachers gathered ideas – "lots and lots of ideas" – from staff and students; the project became a regular part of staff meetings. Again and again, the core team brought it back to the staff, involving them at every step. Then came the task of narrowing the list down.

Pollination: The kids' wishes

What became known as "Project Outdoors" began with an open palette on

the whole school campus, then focused on a flat grassy area outside the library and visible from several classrooms. All the children in grades K-3 joined in, via the designer-in-residence program, to collectively design this space. They learned about wildlife and habitat, practiced mapping skills, explored the schoolyard firsthand, investigated local ecosystems, surveyed their fellow students, staff and parents, filled in wish maps with their ideas, tested soil, drew sound maps, took words walks, and developed grid designs. Eventually, they narrowed their wish lists to these features: plants (trees, shrubs, perennials); benches; paths; rocks and stone wall; stone terrace; and stream.

Fruiting: Implementing the plan

Installation engaged the whole community, from students to staff to parents from many backgrounds and interests, local contractors, business owners, engineers and a wildlife educator/landscape designer. Children started seeds in their classrooms and prepared the ground. Weekend work groups moved earth, built berms and planted boulders. They laid a terrace with local stone and contributed perennials from their own gardens. Funds came from the PTO, a student memorial and teacher retirement celebrations, supported by contributions from Wellborn Ecology Fund and the N.H. Conservation License Plate Wildlife Action Grants.

HOME continued on page 8

HOME continued from page 7

Project Outdoors brought together a wide spectrum of people to collaborate on, create and cultivate a schoolyard habitat. The flat grassy site that provided a recess area for some children has been transformed. Contoured berms shape the landscape, encouraging microhabitats for many different plants, and stimulating children's growth and exploration as they build motor skills, learn about how things work, and about sharing and creative play. The habitat area is now used for storytime, art study and science lessons, including Four Winds Nature Institute programs.

Future phases will involve removal of invasive species and restoration of the native woodland plant community, and a revival of the nature trail that runs through this woodland.

Growth: Making new connections

A new school committee has formed to link the two planted areas – the original vegetable garden and Project Outdoors – each of which developed from a single team project to all-school involvement. The children's Garden Club tends both spaces. Fairy houses have emerged in the garden beds, the gym teacher built an outdoor ice skating rink, and even the librarian got into the act. The theme of the fall reading incen-



A student assists teacher Nancy Hall in planting a chokeberry to provide summer fruit for birds.

tive was “the more you read, the more you feed” – black oil sunflower seed for the birds was the students’ gold award for reading.

The two areas complement one another, covering all aspects of child health – psychological, spiritual, physical and nutritional. It's grown to become part of the school culture, as visitors can see in hallway displays:

“Each one comes with many gifts to share. So many flowers, no two the same, but each is a part of the garden here.”

Fertilizer: Mt. Lebanon Tips for Success

What is unique about Mt. Lebanon that cultivated this success? The teacher team will say it's their close connection with the Four Winds Institute programs, alternative recess and walking club, tree circle, story bench and the trail system. They'll also tell you:

“There is no single path.”

“Allow for serendipity – go with a lot of give and take.”

“Make it shared ownership between staff.”

“Involve kids.”

“Coordinate and communicate for different needs.”

“Have confidence that kids are learning even when it doesn't look like they are.”

“Once it's planted, the job isn't done.”

“It's better to try and even meet with some success than never to try at all.”

What is unique about your school community? Apply these tips to your own site and species, and in turn, bring back your questions, solutions and success stories to all of us.



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