September 7, 2006

Dear Mr. Kirk,

My name is Barb Rezabek and I am the coordinator for our DNR grant. I am proud to let you know that our prairie plants were installed in June and are looking great. The students enjoyed being involved in the entire process and look forward to the continuing upkeep of our newly planted courtyard. Per Kathy Barker, I was asked to send in the paperwork concerning grant #05-018W prior to receiving our newspaper article. We are having a technical difficulty in having the paper get our article in the paper. He has promised us that it is forthcoming. I will send you the copy once I have received it.

Thank you again for your cooperation with our extension to our grant. Our students and community have benefited from this project. We look forward to our plants thriving in their new surroundings. If you need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Barbara L. Rezabek

Barbara L. Rezabek
Intervention Specialist
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Mannheim Middle School was a proud recipient of a 2004 Department of Natural Resources (DNR) grant. Due to circumstances beyond our control we were forced to ask for an extension. This project became the "Mannheim Middle Prairie Project 2005". The purpose of this project was to add native prairie plants to a courtyard on the school grounds, to involve students in a project to enhance the beauty of their school and neighborhood, to help students develop knowledge about plants which are native to Illinois and to teach them about planting and maintaining a garden. Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students were involved with the planning, unloading, and installation of the plants. Over the next school year and beyond we will have students help with the upkeep of the prairie plants in the courtyard.

With the help of our district's landscaper we were able to research and determine which prairie plants would work best with our land available. We also lucked out with the sister of one of our teacher's working at a nursery so we were able to plant 171 prairie plants. We had to wait until May of 2006 as we needed to have the time, tools, and man power to do the tearing up of the existing ground cover plus the digging of the holes.

The plants were ordered and delivered the last week of May. Sixth and seventh graders were able to unload the truck and place the plants in a safe area by the courtyard. Students took turns watering them to make sure they didn't wither. On June 1st we began tearing up the ground cover and making way for the new prairie plants. Students were involved with the removal of the ground cover, digging holes, placing the plants into the holes correctly, and finally covering them with the proper amount of dirt. The ground cover was not wasted as the students bagged the ivy up (roots included) for many faculty and staff to take home and plant in their own yards. At the end of each planting session, students took turns watering all the plants as the sprinkling system was not working properly. Since our project has been completed, the sprinkling system has been repaired. Students will be checking to see how our plants are growing as 15 classrooms look out onto the courtyard. Teachers are planning on monitoring the plants and seeing what animal life comes to visit the courtyard. We had a mallard duck that laid eggs this year and we had to wait until she was done before we could go in and work. Unfortunately, the ducklings did not hatch. Students will also be able to see how the prairie plants look and survive during the four seasons. We hope that with the restoration of the courtyard with the prairie plants that we will see an environment which will become user friendly for the school to use.

Seventh and eighth grade students did most of the planting due to our schedule. Many students also came after school to help with all of the work. Parents have come up to compliment us on what a nice job we had done and how much their son/daughter enjoyed being involved with the project. During the summer, the summer school staff and the maintenance crew have been keeping a watchful eye on the plants. We have lost a few but are hoping that all will survive the winter and come back even heartier in the spring. Students will be involved with the weeding and constant upkeep with the ground cover as we don't want it to overtake the prairie plants.

This project enabled our students to see a different side of the teachers. They were surprised to find out that we shared a love of nature and gardening. Many had helped out at home or with their dad's businesses and were glad to be a part of this project. I feel the best part is that students came back on their own time to help complete

the plantings. Even after school was done, many seventh and eighth graders came back to make sure everything was cleaned up and taken care of.

I am glad that we were able to be a recipient of a DNR grant. I am glad that I saw the opportunity in an Outdoor Illinois magazine and was given full support by my principal to go ahead and submit a grant. The students enjoyed this so much that they want to continue doing similar activities around the district.

Total expenditures for this project were: $746.52. This was the amount for the prairie plants.

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