



Testimony of  
Grace Manubay, Acting Co-Chair  
DC Schoolyard Greening  
December 6, 2006

Before the District of Columbia Board of Education  
On the Superintendent's Master Facilities Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on the DCPS 2006 Master Facilities Plan. I am *Grace Manubay, Acting Co-Chair* of DC Schoolyard Greening. As part of the DC Environmental Education Consortium, DC Schoolyard Greening (DCSG) was founded in May 2003 by local and national non-profit organizations, city government agencies, teachers, and concerned individuals. Our mission is to increase and improve schoolyard green spaces to promote ecological literacy and environmental stewardship among students, teachers, parents and the surrounding community. Many of our partner organizations, teachers, and parents have worked to bring green spaces to at least 56 schools in the District of Columbia (see attached list).

We have observed that some students in DC Public Schools get to school by 8:30am and do not set foot outside of the building again until being dismissed at 3:15pm. To provide teachers with learning tools needed to bring their students outdoors and into the fresh air, DC Schoolyard Greening offers teacher training courses that incorporate schoolyards into standards-based school curriculum and teach teachers how to start school gardens and other greening projects. We have an annual bus tour that highlights 5 school garden projects each fall. In addition to these educational activities, we provide classroom resources and funding to DCPS teachers.

Extending the classroom beyond the physical school building into the surrounding green space can be extremely beneficial for students and teachers. Research has shown that green schoolyards and outdoor learning can provide substantial academic, developmental and social benefits to children. A study conducted in 2000 by the National Environmental Education & Training Foundation found that integrating environment-based education into academic programs improves reading, math, science, and social studies test scores and that classroom discipline problems decline.

These findings are consistent with the 1998 State Education and Environment Roundtable (SEER) study – *Closing the Achievement Gap: Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning*, by Dr. Gerald Lieberman and Linda Hoody. **In addition to bolstering students' performance on standardized measures of academic achievement across all disciplines – reading, writing, math, science, and social studies - environment-based education programs**



**were demonstrated to reduce discipline and classroom management problems, increase engagement and enthusiasm for learning, and increase students' pride in and ownership of their accomplishments (SEER, 1998).**

Many of our member organizations are working with schools this year to enhance student learning and the schoolyard. These green spaces on schoolyards are just one way teachers can engage their students in *Meaningful Watershed Education Experiences*, a DCPS science curriculum requirement aligned with No Child Left Behind (NCLB). However, schoolyard greening can be integrated into many different contexts across the school curriculum.

A perfect example can be seen here at Cardozo Senior High School. George Telzrow, the DC history and geography teacher, as well as the faculty advisor for Cardozo's student newspaper, started a peace garden in 2002 and continues to maintain it with his students. Originally conceived as a response to the terrorist attacks in 2001, Mr. Telzrow and his students acknowledged a need for a peaceful, green space on their school grounds. The Cardozo Peace Garden is a school conservation site, which is a partnership grant program between DC Schoolyard Greening members Project Learning Tree, Potomac Conservancy, and the District Department of the Environment. These partners will work with 5 additional schools this year to create school conservation sites where students will plant trees, create meadows, and grow gardens. Another DC Schoolyard Greening member organization, Casey Trees, has planted trees at Cardozo as part of the GreenTech education program. This year, Casey Trees will involve students in planting trees at 10 schools. Garden Resources of Washington, another DC Schoolyard Greening member, has also provided funding for this garden through its mini-grants program. When asked his thoughts about the garden, Mr. Telzrow commented:

**In my twelve years of teaching here at Cardozo, the Peace Garden project has been one of the highlights. Through this project I have seen students learn environmental science with their minds and hands, learn the value of hard work and community building, and engage in discussion about building peace in their community. While their school has deteriorated, they have built a site of natural beauty they are proud of.**

Including the school grounds as part of the Master Facilities Plan (MEP) follows goals established by the DCPS Master Education Plan. As the draft Master Facilities Plan states, "To a significant extent, the success of the MEP depends on the physical environment." The physical environment includes these outdoor learning areas that teachers have created with their students. We feel that the Master Facilities Plan should include provisions not only for maintaining as much existing green space as possible during renovation, but for actively designing to remove asphalt, increase green space, and reduce stormwater runoff. This will make schools more inviting for students and teachers as well as make schoolyards more neighborhood and



environmentally friendly. This is just as important at schools that will be modernized as it is at schools that will be completely rebuilt. We recommend that the design incorporate existing environmental learning labs as well as add new ones at schools wherever they do not presently exist.

We also recommend that the Master Facilities Plan include recommendations on how to use or improve school grounds to enhance student learning and benefit our communities. We feel that it should include provisions for adequate funding to include outdoor learning areas and conservation sites, and a subsequent budget for maintaining these educational and ecological resources throughout the year. We recommend that school building personnel and all contract landscapers receive training in how to care for the trees, garden plantings, and other landscape features that enhance the schoolyard.

Butterfly gardens, vegetable gardens, peace gardens, nature retreats, outdoor learning labs, living urban schoolyards, rainbow gardens - we consider all of these schoolyard green spaces as outdoor extensions of the classroom and school building. We urge you to be mindful of these resources during the facilities modernization process, and DC Schoolyard Greening would be happy to participate in the process. This is an exceptional opportunity to work together to align educational goals with landscape design. We can provide workshops for facilities personnel in properly maintaining schoolyards, help identify areas on schoolyards that will lend themselves as excellent spaces for outdoor learning, and provide a listing and detailed descriptions of existing schoolyard greening sites on DCPS land.

Sincerely,

Grace Manubay, Acting Co-Chair, DC Schoolyard Greening

Gilda Allen, Member

Buffie Brownstein, Member

Nancy Huvendick, DC Program Director, 21st Century School Fund

Kimberly Rush Lynch, Program Director, Washington Youth Garden

George Telzrow, Teacher, Cardozo Senior High School, DC Public Schools

Jeff Wilkes, DC Smart Schools

Attachment:

DC PUBLIC AND CHARTER SCHOOLS WITH SCHOOLYARD GREENING PROJECTS

Resources:

*Closing the Achievement Gap, Executive Summary*, Gerald Lieberman and Linda Hoody, State Education and Environment Roundtable, 1998.

*Environment-based Education: Creating Higher Performance Schools and Students*, The National Environmental Education & Training Foundation, 2000.



## **DC PUBLIC AND CHARTER SCHOOLS WITH SCHOOLYARD GREENING PROJECTS**

AS OF 23 AUGUST, 2006 – NOT A COMPLETE LIST

### **ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

Aiton Elementary School  
Amidon Elementary School (in 2007)  
Bancroft Elementary School  
Barnard Elementary  
Bowen Elementary School  
Burroughs Elementary School  
Burrville Elementary School  
C Melvin Sharpe Health School  
Children's Studio School  
Draper Elementary School  
Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom  
Public Charter School  
Harriet Tubman Elementary School  
Hendley Elementary School  
Horace Mann Elementary School  
Janney Elementary School  
JC Nalle Elementary School  
John Eaton Elementary School  
LaSalle Elementary School (in 2007)  
Ludlow-Taylor Elementary School  
Maime D. Lee School  
Marie Reed Elementary School  
Moten Elementary School  
Murch Elementary School  
MV Leckie Elementary School  
Myrtilla Miner Elementary School  
Peabody Elementary School  
PR Harris Educational Center  
Ross Elementary School  
Savoy Elementary School  
Seaton Elementary School  
Smothers Elementary School  
Stanton Elementary School  
Stoddert Elementary School  
Watkins Elementary School  
Whittier Elementary School (in 2007)  
Wilkinson Elementary School  
Wilson Elementary School

### **MIDDLE SCHOOLS AND JUNIOR HIGHS**

Backus Middle School  
Browne Junior High School (in 2007)  
Hart Middle School (in 2007)  
Francis Junior High School  
Kelly Miller Middle School  
Prospect Learning Center

### **HIGH SCHOOLS**

Anacostia Senior High School  
Banneker Academic High  
Cardozo Senior High School  
Cesar Chavez School for Public Policy – Parkside  
Duke Ellington High School for the Performing Arts  
Kamit Institute for Magnificent Achievers (KIMA)  
Public Charter School  
M.M. Washington Career Senior High School  
McKinley Technology High School  
SEED Public Charter School – high school level  
Theodore Roosevelt High School  
Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School  
Wilson Senior High School  
Woodson Senior High School