

**Solanco Education Foundation**  
**2021-2022 Teacher Venture Grant Evaluation**  
**Project Title: Garden Club/Lindsey Orr**

The 2021-2022 Teacher Venture Grant made it possible for thirty fifth grade students at Providence Elementary to get their hands dirty and learn about nature, all while revitalizing an outdoor learning environment for our school. In this summary, I will share the successes and revisions that were made to this grant. The first change included a name change. The title Garden Club was changed to Nature Club at the start of this project.

All of my students signed up to participate in this year's nature club. We focused primarily on the nature trail. The Providence PTO approved a mini-grant for a naturalist from Lancaster County Parks and Recreation to visit our classroom. The naturalist walked the trail with me ahead of time and pointed out plant species and evidence of animal habitats found in our backyard. In the classroom, she showed the students an array of artifacts. She also created a special scavenger



hunt for our students. When we took our next hike, students applied their new gained plant and animal knowledge to locate plants, trees, and wildlife habitats in the woods. I had students hear woodpeckers for the first time in their life, spy a garter snake sun bathing, identify muddy tracks, locate woodpecker holes, a flicker habitat, and observe the destruction of pine beetles behind the bark on fallen trees.

I taught the students about trail etiquette. I thought this was an important revision to the tasks of the grant because I had 30 eager fifth graders hiking with me outside. As the only adult in the group, I had to set expectations and the understanding of trail etiquette helped students stay together. Students were taught where to stop and wait for the members of a large group. Students also learned about trail



blazes (markings) and helped to mark the direction of the trail for other students/classes at Providence Elementary. I also incorporated the use of my classroom 3D printer to create medallions to mark the trail. Interested students used Tinkercad to design a medallion for the nature

trail. The class voted on their favorite design and then we printed 15 medallions. The students took turns hammering the medallions in the trees throughout the trail.

As the weather became warmer my students observed the buds

and leaves begin to grow on the trees. We held discussions of what plants we should add to the trail. By seeking out expert advice from Amanda Grumbling, owner of AB Hardscape and Landscape, I put together a plant list and submitted vendor quotes for an ESSR III grant. We were able to obtain a variety of 20 native ferns, 6 native azaleas, 3 native Viburnum, and 3 native Clethra. Students learned about the plants and found ideal locations to dig and place the plants



throughout the trail. Students used their gloves and tools that were provided from this grant to work together and plant all 32 plants. We revisited the plants to apply Bio-tone (plant starter), water, and mulch. The students were proud of the work they completed and even named some of their plants!

My students were excited about the Nature Club and took ownership of their projects. This year was a success and I am thankful for the Teacher Venture Grant. I will be able to use all of the tools with future club members as we continue to take care of the trail for outdoor school use.

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