

B'nai Tzedek Young Philanthropy Grant Program

PROJECT TITLE:

I. Proposal Summary (Executive Summary) for use on ballot.

The Proposal Summary should be about one paragraph of 1-3 sentences and should include the most general description of the use that will be made of the funds. Be concise and compelling, your readers are age 13-32.

Our goal is to enhance the current static structure playground by adding various interactive centers, such as a three-tiered water/natural element table, a large wooden block building center, a pretend town “traffic system,” and a balancing station composed of movable logs and stumps. These centers will not only inspire physical play but also open ended problem solving, ingenuity, and collaboration.

II. Project Description (Program Narrative)

What is the problem or need you are trying to address and how will you do it?

Do your best to keep this document to 1 page.

This section *should provide the reader with an* explanation of the problem or need the program will address as well as who and how many people will be impacted by this funding. Remember funding is over 3 years in the amount of \$5,000 per year, totaling \$15,000.

Our current playground resides in a quiet wooded section of our 34-acre campus, adjacent to the school building. It is enjoyed daily by over one hundred students with ages ranging from one to six years old. What it lacks is encouragement of creative, thoughtful play. Our vision for improving this space has three primary goals: promoting the importance of community, providing opportunities for outdoor STEAM based experiences, and celebrating the wonderment inspired by our natural surroundings.

The playground space at our school is more than just a place for kids to burn off energy. It’s an outdoor classroom. While students work to improve their swinging and sliding skills, they are also developing social skills. They are learning to be a part of a community that shares, takes turns, collaborates, questions, and laughs when a friend tells a good joke. All of the centers funded by this grant will encourage students to work together and practice *kavod*. The building blocks and stumps for balancing might require the heavy lifting and pushing skills of more than one child. The pretend “traffic system” will inspire dramatic role-playing of townspeople. The water and natural element table will entice students to communicate curiosity and share discoveries with their classmates.

Inside the classroom, our progressive educational goals include a focus on STEAM integration. The proposed playground improvements allow our school to offer more STEAM based learning experiences in an outdoor environment. During recess, these centers invite students to be hands on, learning as they practice problem solving. They inspire students to be engineers, scientists, and innovators. How can a child alter bicycle “transportation routes” by moving a sign? What happens when a student tries to build a life sized library or Mars rover with blocks? There are also infinite ways these new playground additions support bringing STEAM integrated curriculum outdoors. A three-tiered water table is ideal for building marsh habitats or recreating how our city’s water system purifies water. A balancing center made of trees is the perfect place to discuss the importance of Tu B’Shevat and conduct tree investigations, complete with bark rubbing art and insect compositions.

Improving our playground in any way supports our students’ exploration of outdoors; however, these specific additions also promote developmental skill building while enjoying nature. Students can practice fine motor skills by crushing leaves for a fall-flavored soup in the town’s “bakery” or sorting pebbles at the water table. They can work on cooperation while negotiating the laws of the “highway.” Building with large wooden blocks might require students to use sequencing skills or evaluate how shapes impact architectural design. Ultimately, our children will grow, learn, and find joy outdoors, gaining an appreciation for the large and small marvels of our natural world.