



THE PROJECT: OUTDOOR GARDEN CLASSROOM

Skinner North's Green Team set out to create a quiet and calm space for students to unwind, read, or complete classwork in a peaceful natural environment. With help from their project mentors from Gilbane Building Company, they designed an outdoor learning space in front of their school and constructed six wooden benches to fill the space. They then planned a school-wide unveiling on Earth Day to share the accomplishment with the rest of the school.

Project Type: Outdoor Classroom

Students Involved: 500

Staff Involved: 2

Location: Chicago

Grade Levels Involved: 8th grade

Number of Students Impacted: 500



They designed an outdoor garden classroom on a quiet spot on the front lawn. Students worked with architects at Gilbane to finalized plans, take measurements, sketch benches and order materials. Students planned a whole school unveiling on earth day to invite all grades to visit their new outdoor classroom space. - Zach Schroeder



PROCESS

Gilbane's project engineer, Michelle Edwards, proposed a few sample designs, and the students decided to move ahead with a circular formation of benches, allowing students to see each other and their educators clearly from any position. Once the basic design was established, the green team measured the space and drew sample drawings of benches to fit the space. Then, they created a materials list for the benches and priced materials at three local stores to find the most affordable option. After crafting their own request for funding from their parent organization, students were awarded funds to cover the expenses. As a class they met with the Gilbane team to plan a build day and ensure that safety measures would be taken during construction. Finally, students helped construct their benches, and distributed them around the green space.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

The Skinner North Green Team successfully designed and created six wooden benches, turning the front lawn of their school into a welcoming, accessible space for the school community. This space is now able to seat an entire classroom, and a Google calendar has been set up so that classes can reserve times to use the space. The project has facilitated student leadership, construction skills, and provided a space for kids to relax and spend time outside. The team plans to continue adding to the space, with hopes of adding additional plants and art to the garden.

