

# Welcome to Chickering's Outdoor Classroom

## *Where Children and Nature Grow together*

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### 1. **History**

The Dover PTO, Parents and School Administration have worked together over the past few years to create a beautiful landscape at Chickering where the children of the Dover Community can enjoy playing and learning every day. PTO, Chicatabot Garden Club, The Dover Tree Committee and the Dover Parks and Recreation department have planted several trees, shrubs, plants and bulbs at the entrance of the building which make the school a wonderful place to visit.

In Spring 2008, Arbor Alliance and Natureworks Lanscape installed a comprehensive outdoor space or "Outdoor Classroom," that provides an actual outdoor destination for learning, teaching and exploring with nature.

The Massachusetts Horticultural Society provided Chickering with their expertise and knowledge in the development of outdoor learning spaces and this has resulted in a plan for an "Outdoor Classroom" which is located near the Kindergarten wing.

There are seating areas, a potting shed, raised bed gardens, a rain garden, a sundial, anemometers (wind instruments) and many more interesting elements. You may have seen two trees installed this past spring in the space – one a teacher retirement recognition and the other is the Fifth Grade Class Gift. These were our first additions to what is the Chickering Outdoor Classroom.

### 2. **Mission and Goals**

#### Mission:

The Mission of the Chickering Outdoor Classroom is to provide a useful, beautiful space for the children, teachers, parents and volunteers of the Dover Community to experience nature as a primary tool for learning.

#### Goals:

- Foster and develop student, teacher and community appreciation of our natural environment through curriculum based outdoor lesson plans
- Provide a different framework for students to learn
- Enhances and reinforce the curriculum components related to math, science, language arts, nutrition, social studies, art and music.
- Improve standardized test scores
- Make the school grounds an exciting and beautiful space for learning and playing
- Create an opportunity for community outreach (senior citizens, food pantries, girl scouts, cub scouts, DEDA, community education programs) ]

#### **Current Projects:**

Chickering anticipates a very busy School year there are so many exciting projects planned for the children. Some of these include:

#### a. Cultivating the Raised Bed Gardens:

Come see some of the vegetables and flowers that are growing in the gardens. ([Click here for photographs](#))

DEDA has adopted a raised bed and has an amazing garden with vegetables and flowers! The students and staff lead by Lorraine Clough have turned their bed in to a wonderful learning zone. We look forward to watching and eating the fruits of their labor!

There are many other exciting plants growing in the raised beds planted by students from all of the other grades and the Rain Garden is taller than many of the students! Please see the pictures section for amazing images!

Some of the future anticipated projects for the Raised beds may include:

- A Sunflower Garden
- A Peter Rabbit Garden
- A Scarecrow Garden
- An Alphabet Garden
- An Herb Garden

- A Colonial Garden
- A Butterfly Garden
- A Fairy Garden
- A Pizza Garden
- A Zoo Garden

These gardens and their plants provide wonderful opportunities for the children to study the plant life cycle, learn about nutrition and food origins, learn their letters, use math to plan spacing and chart plant growth, understand literature, poetry and art inspired by nature, journal, touch, grow and get closer to the environment.

b. Use of the Space for understanding Math, Literature, Science, Nutrition with projects such as:

- o Study of Animal Life with new Bird feeders
- o Bird watching
- o Small creature habitats
- o Vermiculture (Worms!)
- o Insects and Butterflies

c. Nutrition:

The outdoor Classroom will provide a space for the children to grow edible plants and vegetables. Data suggests that as children spend more time in a garden growing food to eat, they are more likely to eat it! This translates to better nutritional choices and steps towards healthier living. Chickering School is devoted to always providing healthy food options for the children and the gardens allow the teachers and staff to explore the origins of food, how to grow healthy nutritional options for snacking as well as meal preparation.

d. Stewardship:

Students are able to develop a love of nature, a love of the outdoor classroom and this will translate to a deeper respect and appreciation of our natural environment.

e. Friendships: Gardens provide children with opportunities for collaborative work, therefore allowing deeper understanding of one another and a greater respect for each others strengths. Friendships will bloom over shared interest in the outdoor classroom and the wonderful lessons about our natural world it is sure to provide.

f. Current Environmental Projects:

Each Fall the second grade at Chickering Elementary complete a wonderful! Fall Bulb Planting project: The students add over 500 bulbs to the front of the cafeteria. The Bulbs have been donated by Natureworks Landscaping of Walpole Mass. We look forward to seeing the beautiful flowers each spring! Look back for updated photos of second grade classes learning about Bulbs and how to plant them!

[Thank yous](#)

A Big Thank you to Arbor Alliance -- Joe Biagioni and his team and the wonderful staff at Natureworks Landscape Company, led by Matthew Gramer and Ted and Missy Gramer (who's daughter attends the Chickering school) -- they have done an amazing job bringing to life the detailed vision of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society's drawings as well as all of the tireless input from:

Deb Reinneman --Chickering Curriculum Coordinator  
 Dawn Fattore- PTO Liaison for the Outdoor Classroom  
 Meg Field and Elizabeth Freeman- dedicated parents  
 Peter Heinrich- Massachusetts Horticultural Society Gardens Curator

And students who have volunteered time over the weekends to weed, plant and care for the current plants in the OC

[Please Click the following link to contact Megan Field who coordinates learning projects in the Outdoor Classroom, All Parents are welcome to participate in any Garden Learning project regardless of whether their child is participating on that day.](#)

[Teaching the Children of the Chickering School to respect and love nature, as well as explore learning basic math, literature, science, nutrition, art and music lessons are the goals of the space and the parents and teachers who worked tirelessly on its installation. If you are a passionate gardener, or simply love nature and plants, please do not hesitate to send Megan an E-mail, with any input, or interest.](#)