

ECC Times

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THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER AT THE ROCHESTER SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

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**Strong Roots Begin
In Early Childhood Education**

Our New Outdoor Space

From my office window, I see that our ECC playground has evolved into a natural playground and classroom. I have had the privilege of watching this becoming a reality ever since I became the Director in 2011. We have had some enthusiastic teachers over the years who talked about having a new play space designed specifically for the ages of our students.

The special new play/learning space is the ECC Natural Playground and Outdoor Classroom where our students will be connecting with the natural world. This interest was rekindled by two of our teachers, Julie Shahin who is now retired and Karen Windhorn, our FIRST teacher, about two years ago. They did research and visited some nature-based play and learning spaces in the area. Then we consulted with Nature Explore, a company that specializes in designing nature-rich outdoor spaces. Needless to say, we got a lot of support from the school and donations to help fund this huge endeavor.

The new space will support our students' interactions with the natural world. The different areas will promote their physical, cognitive, creativity, problem solving and other important skills. Our staff just recently received a short training to better understand the goals of the space before our students can begin using it. We anticipate opening it right after our students return from Thanksgiving.

We should be all thankful that we are able to bring the joys of natural connections to the lives of children and families!

Happy Thanksgiving!!

Susan

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