

William H Ray Elementary

2023 Project Report



The Project:

The Ray School community installed an eco-lawn on the compacted soil of their east lot, frequently used for large events. Because of the area's high foot traffic and the field's tree canopy, there was a high density of weeds and bare spots. Working with Midwest Grows Green, the Ray School transitioned the field to a durable, low maintenance turfgrass with limited watering, pesticides, and fertilizers.

Project Focus: Habitat Restoration & Biodiversity

Location: Chicago, IL

Staff Involved: 10

Students: 70



This project helped improve drainage and gave students more usable outdoor space in an area that had jokingly been called the “Dust Bowl” prior to the turf’s installation.



The Process & Outcome:

In mid-September 2022, around 20 volunteers pulled nearly 2,000 pounds of weeds, prepped the soil, and planted a blend of clover. They then mulched the seed and constructed a fence around the area, to protect it from energetic elementary school feet. Over the next several weeks, volunteers watered the lawn, ensuring the soil didn't dry out. In late October, the school held a winterization workday where volunteers, along with the soil scientist, de-constructed the fence and then protected the soil with long ribbons of straw. In late April, following the snowy winter, 5th graders at the Ray School participated in a spring workday, in which they worked with the team from Midwest Grows Green, as well as an arborist, on planting final seeds, mulching, tree trimming, and a general trash pickup.

