

Mayor, Superintendent On Hand To Celebrate Ebert Elementary School's New Learning Landscape

Completion Of 22 Alliance Projects

From 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. today (Monday, Nov. 24), Mayor John Hickenlooper, DPS Superintendent Jerry Wartgow, Principal Joan Wamsley and Ebert Elementary School students will welcome parents, friends and funders to dedicate the school's new learning landscape. The event also marks the completion of the Learning Landscape Alliance's three-year initiative to fund 22 learning landscapes in Denver's "focus" neighborhoods. The dedication will include brief remarks and student choral and theatrical performances. Since 1999, the Learning Landscape Alliance, a public-private partnership, has raised \$9 million from the City of Denver, DPS, foundations, Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), businesses, volunteer organizations and school communities to build learning landscapes at 22 Denver elementary schools. The Alliance recently completed its last seven landscapes for Barrett, Castro, Columbine, Columbian, Ebert, Gilpin, and Mitchell elementary schools. The Alliance includes representatives from DPS, the City of Denver, the University of Colorado at Denver and foundations. The landscapes, averaging \$430,000 each, include a playfield, age-appropriate equipment, gardens, trees, non-traditional play features, shade structures and a gateway to the neighborhood. The objectives of the initiative include reducing discipline issues on school grounds, providing better physical education and resources for classroom projects, establishing a gathering place for neighborhood families and strengthening neighborhood-school partnerships. Denver citizens have responded positively to the concept, recently approving a school bond that includes \$10 million for 36 additional learning landscapes in the next few years. Ebert Elementary School now has new play equipment, art created by students and a prominent Denver artist and a learning theme of cartography - not to mention new gardens and trees to shade the asphalt. The landscape includes three new age-appropriate play structures with ADA accessible engineered wood fiber safety surfacing. The Early Childhood Education (ages 3-6) and kindergarten play area is fenced and contains new play equipment, a sandbox and gardens. The primary play equipment for grades 1-2 (ages 6-7) is located within the new asphalted area play surface shaded by existing trees. The intermediate play equipment for grades 3-5 or 6 (ages 7-12) is located near the new shaded outdoor performing area. The overall site now has new asphalt ball games including four-square, hopscotch, tetherball and basketball. One of Ebert's main learning themes is that of cartography. Cartography is used on the ground plane through a series of maps that demonstrate scaled relationships to the students' surroundings. These maps include the United States, Colorado, the Four Corners and a portion of the City and County of Denver's city street map in relationship to Ebert Elementary School. The teachers can incorporate these maps into the curriculum to teach students about scale, their location in Denver, and Denver's relationship to Colorado and the US. Art pieces, incorporated throughout the playground, include banners made by students and a mural created by Tony Ortega and Ebert students. The trees and gardens were planted by the school and surrounding communities during a volunteer build project. These volunteers donated their Saturday, Oct. 18, to plant gardens, move garden mulch, lay brick pavers and move three mountains of engineered wood fiber. Without them, Ebert's playground would have been much less successful. For more information, contact Ebert Elementary School, 410 Park Ave. West, 303-295-7869.