

Courtyard at Lincoln School going green with urban garden

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Photos by Chris Brooks

Lincoln School students will learn lessons in ‘green’ technology this year in the school courtyard, adapted as an outdoor classroom.

KEARNY – As fall classes resume this month, there’ll be a new look to Lincoln Middle School as it starts its second year.

During the summer, the school’s courtyard began transitioning into a very special outdoor classroom dedicated to horticulture.

One section has a series of long wooden containers stacked with soil; in another area, seedlings are sprouting from the ground. And there are strategically placed water hoses.

But the centerpiece of this design is still awaiting delivery, that being a greenhouse. It all adds up to this: Lincoln School has been selected as one of two school demonstration projects in Hudson County (the other is at Horace Mann School in Bayonne) known in scientific parlance as a “Green Infrastructure Municipal Outreach and Technical Assistance Program.”

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The mission is a partnership of the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission and the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program to show communities “how ... ‘green’ technologies can reduce flooding and other hazards to our local waterways.”

That is how letters sent to Kearny school officials describe the purpose of the joint endeavor.

When the project comes to fruition, “the interior courtyard ... will be transformed with a rain garden, rainwater harvesting system, tree and vegetative plantings with raised garden beds and benches for an outdoor classroom area.”

The new venture is slated for a dedication ceremony Sept. 21. At the same time, some Lincoln School youngsters will be exploring another envirotechnical enterprise.

As outlined at an Aug. 19 meeting of the Board of Education’s Curriculum & Instruction Committee, the school will be running an after-school club called STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) whose members – up to 20 – will be engaged in WaterBotics, building, programming and maneuvering underwater robots.

Lincoln teachers Patricia Hester-Fearon, Jessica Mc- Masters, Christopher Ragucci and April Amenta attended a three-day workshop at Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, in June to learn about the concept and techniques involved so they could guide students in the process.

And the Kearny Optimists Club, led by BOE trustee Cecilia Lindenfesler, donated \$3,000 for the purchase of a WaterBotics kit containing materials and software. To complete the program, students will need to complete four projects covering at least 25 hours of labor.

Teachers from the school’s social studies, art and math departments will also be participating.

To cover the costs of such kits beyond this school year, school staff will be reaching out to students whose parents and/or family members in the engineering field whose employers may be willing to finance those purchases.