



Kearny school's new garden is real outdoor classroom



A new rain garden has opened at Kearny's Lincoln Middle School, and was dedicated on Monday, Sept. 21. The joint venture with Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission and Rutgers University is "completely sustainable," according to the superintendent. (Photos courtesy of Patricia Blood and Bob Zika)



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[KEARNY](#) — Middle school students in Kearny are using their school's new rain garden to learn about the environment, through the environment.

This [outdoor classroom](#) at Lincoln Middle School was gifted through a partnership between [Rutgers University and the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission](#), school officials said.

"We now have an environmental classroom of sorts that can be used for instruction as well as other special activities by students throughout the district and community organizations," Superintendent Patricia Blood said.

The garden features a rain water harvesting system, tree and vegetable plantings, raised garden beds, a greenhouse, decking for handicap accessibility, as well as a teacher podium and benches for 24 students, Lincoln Principal Bob Zika said.

The project will "serve as an example for school and community members to engage and learn about green infrastructure, and how we can reduce stormwater runoff into our waterways together," [PVSC Executive Director Michael DeFrancisci said](#).

Officially dedicated Monday, the project was installed this summer, officials said. Blood called the project "completely sustainable," noting that the benches and podium were constructed from trees removed from the Passaic River.

Patricia Hester-Fearon, an eighth grade science teacher at Lincoln School who helped develop the garden, said seventh and eighth grade science classes will use the new "classroom," as well as members of the [science, technology, engineering, art and math](#) and 4-H clubs.

"We currently collect soil samples from the rain garden and track moisture amounts to provide data to [Rutgers for a soil summit program](#) we are involved with," she said.

"We will continue our study of both drought resistant native plant species and various plant types appropriate for water absorption."

Also, students will be using raised beds to grow "herbs and produce for a 'farm to table' program," she said.

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