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Nutley editorial: Study nature in proper setting



FILE PHOTO

Bloomfield Middle School eighth-graders Jerome Morrissey, left, and Armani Johnson join in the 2012 opening of the Clark's Pond outdoor classroom.

NUTLEY SUN

One October 2012 morning, Bloomfield Middle School students got their first taste of a "living" classroom.

Overlooking the Clark's Pond waterfall behind the school, officials unveiled the district's newest learning space, consisting of recovered wooden logs turned into benches and a teacher's desk carved from a dead tree trunk.

"This is what everyone across the nation is trying to do," said BMS Principal Sal Goncalves, now the district's superintendent. "This is a lot more than getting together in the back of this beautiful campus."

In addition to science, the area will benefit art and music programs, he added.

Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission provided a grant for the project.

"Good ideas and good projects become contagious," Bloomfield Councilman Nicholas Joanow, retired guidance counselor, said at the time. "This will be one of the state's best model programs."

Almost four years later, PVSC has presented an outdoor classroom proposal to the Nutley Board of Education. The Nutley Educational Foundation plans to donate \$3,635 for the project.

As reported in last week's Sun, the instructional setting, proposed for Essex County's Yanticaw Park, could accommodate up to 30 students. It would provide easy access for high school and middle school students, and could also be used by elementary students.

It sounds like a great idea, but apparently the Essex County government needs to be in the loop. Board of education members also raised a concern about flash flooding in the area.

Hopefully, any issues can be resolved soon to make a Nutley outdoor classroom a reality by next fall.