



Sustainable Jersey for Schools Grants Program Funded by NJEA: Grantee Quotes

Quotes from \$10,000 Grant Recipients (Listed alphabetically by county)

"At Jackson Avenue School, we believe students are powerful agents of change. Sustainable NJ allows us to help schools create hands-on learning experiences that inspire students to take meaningful action toward sustainability. We're excited to receive \$10,000 grant to create an innovative outdoor classroom through Sustainable NJ. It's a wonderful example of how Jackson Avenue School can create inclusive, engaging spaces that promote student wellness and environmental awareness. Transforming this space into an inclusive outdoor classroom not only supports student wellness and hands-on learning, but also helps students build meaningful connections with their local environment" – *Mrs. Petrin-Wall, Acting Principal, Jackson Avenue School, Hackensack School District, Bergen County*

"This outdoor classroom will transform the way our students learn by bringing education beyond the walls of the building and into a hands-on, meaningful environment. With features like an outdoor blackboard, seating, and cooking materials connected to our school garden and farm-to-table initiative, students will be able to engage in real-world learning that fosters sustainability, health, and environmental stewardship. This project fills a critical need in our community by providing equitable access to experiential learning opportunities that many of our students may not otherwise have. We are deeply grateful to Sustainable Jersey for supporting our vision of cultivating not only strong learners, but thoughtful, environmentally conscious citizens." – *Shannon Altieri, District Green Team Member & ELA Interventionist, Watsessing Elementary School, Bloomfield Public Schools, Essex County*

"We are incredibly grateful to Sustainable Jersey for Schools and the NJEA for their generous \$10,000 grant in support of our Trees for Schools project. Their steadfast commitment to our students and community continues to make a meaningful difference, and this investment will allow us to create a greener, healthier learning environment for generations to come." – *Dr. Jonathan Hart, Superintendent, Readington Township School District, Hunterdon County*

"The Sustainable Schools award allows us to extend learning beyond the classroom walls. Our Climate Summer Program will give students meaningful opportunities to explore climate science, develop leadership skills, and take action in their own community of Keyport." – *Dr. Lisa Savoia, Superintendent, Keyport School District, Monmouth County*

"On behalf of the Franklin Township Board of Education, and the staff and students of Pine Grove Manor School, I would like to thank Sustainable Jersey for Schools and the New Jersey Education Association for their generous grant, which will allow Pine Grove Manor Elementary School to create an Outdoor Instructional and Sensory Courtyard Classroom for students in Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade. This project will provide spaces focused on hands-on exploration, movement, mindfulness, and self-regulation, supporting both learning and the social-emotional health of our students." – *Dr. John Ravally, Superintendent, Pine Grove Manor Elementary School, Franklin Township Public Schools, Somerset County*

"We are incredibly grateful to receive the 2025 Sustainable Jersey for Schools grant funded by the NJEA. This funding will allow us to transform our courtyard into an outdoor learning space where students can extend their classroom learning into nature while developing a deeper connection to sustainability. In a small rural community like Quinton, where resources and outdoor learning spaces are limited, this project will create meaningful opportunities for hands-on learning, gardening, and environmental stewardship. Our students will not only learn how food is grown, but they will also have the chance to share fresh vegetables and flowers with their families,

strengthening the connection between our school and the community. We are excited to watch this space grow alongside our students.” – *Gwen Herman, Chief School Administrator, Quinton Township School, Quinton Township School District, Salem County*

Select Quotes from Select \$2,000 Grant Recipients (Listed alphabetically by county)

“At Bordentown Regional Middle School, one of our mottos is "Spread Kindness Like Confetti". In establishing a Green Team as well as securing this grant we are hoping to spread kindness to our environment and help our students understand the importance of maintaining a healthy environment for our future.” – *Joseph Sprague, Principal, Bordentown Regional Middle School, Bordentown Regional School District, Burlington County*

“It is our honor to receive a grant from Sustainable Jersey. This grant will provide our school with a refillable water bottle station and reusable bottles for students. By providing everyone with access to clean, portable water, we hope to boost student achievement by keeping students hydrated and in class, rather than spending time in hallways at the fountain. In addition, we hope this encourages healthy hydration habits that help students stay focused, energized, and ready to learn. Finally, we hope to reduce our carbon footprint by cutting down on plastic waste through the use of reusable bottles.” – *Nicole Dennis, Project Lead, Winslow Twp. School No. 2, Winslow Twp. Public Schools, Camden County*

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“Receiving this sustainability grant is more than just funding—it’s a reflection of belief in our students’ potential. By providing mirrors for our inner-city school’s dance studio, we’re not only supporting the environment through thoughtful investment, but also empowering young artists to see themselves, their growth, and their brilliance more clearly every single day.” – *Asael Salgado, Principal, Ezra L Nolan MS 40, Jersey City Public Schools, Hudson County*

“Through the Community Energy Garden Project, we will create a vibrant garden space on our school grounds that enhances environmental and hands-on STEM learning while promoting sustainable practices. This project will also strengthen community engagement and support our students’ social-emotional growth by fostering collaboration, responsibility, and a deeper connection to their school community.” – *Aisha Rhim, Special Education Teacher, Jersey City Public Schools, Hudson County*

“Our school looks forward to implementing changes to our recycling program, focusing more on minimizing food waste, and incorporating composting in our cafeteria. This grant will allow us to provide training and offer incentives to our staff so they become cheerleaders and partners for the project.” – *Lisa Coster, District Green Team Chair, Reading Fleming Intermediate School, Flemington Raritan School District, Hunterdon County*

“Thanks to this funding from Sustainable Jersey for Schools and the New Jersey Education Association, Community Park will be making some much-needed upgrades to well-worn garden equipment. This project will help fund a new roof for the outdoor chalkboard, repair a fence to prevent access to rabbits and other wildlife, and provide soil and wood to repair and restore some of our garden beds. This funding will help ensure future generations of

students get to enjoy the garden as much as the current ones.” – *Dineen Gruchacz, Principal, Community Park Elementary School, Princeton Public Schools, Mercer County*

“Thanks to this funding from Sustainable Jersey for Schools and the New Jersey Education Association, Littlebrook will be adding a drip-irrigation system to the beautiful pollinator beds that surround our building. This project will help these flowers survive summer weather extremes, as occurred last summer, so that our students can continue to experience a bit of wilderness on their school grounds.” – *Luis Ramirez, Principal, Littlebrook Elementary School, Princeton Public Schools, Mercer County*

“We are continuously grateful to the Sustainable Jersey Grants program and NJEA. Their support helps our school create thought provoking, hands-on opportunities that engage our students and help them make connections beyond the textbook.” – *Neyda Evans, Assistant Principal, Edgar Middle School, Metuchen Public Schools, Middlesex County*

“Greenville School will upgrade and enhance the current outdoor classroom. The additions to the outdoor classroom will provide an environment that enriches behaviors that support learning, fosters social and emotional learning and the well-being of both students and staff, while closing achievement gaps. The outdoor classroom will provide students with a wide variety of learning experiences through enriched academic opportunities while encouraging emotional health. We are excited to add to the outdoor classroom at Greenville School.” – *Danielle Palazzolo, Principal, Greenville School, Howell Township Public Schools, Monmouth County*

“A relatively simple though pressing need—outdoor tables for learning—has, because of this opportunity and the support of Sustainable Jersey for Schools, turned into a project that promises mentorship, hands-on skills, and environmental education, and which has the potential to direct and define students’ futures. Talk about putting everything on the table! We’re beyond excited about seeing this project through here at Beachwood Elementary, and we are immensely grateful to Sustainable Jersey and the NJEA for providing us the chance to do so.” – *Kimberly Sierotowicz, Principal, Beachwood Elementary School, Toms River Regional Schools, Ocean County*

“We are grateful for this grant, which allows us to create an outdoor learning space that will benefit all of our Preschool and Kindergarten students at the PLC. By providing seating for an outdoor classroom, we can extend learning beyond the walls of the school and into nature. This directly supports our PreK units of study, such as trees and insects, and gives students meaningful, real-world learning experiences. This project will help us inspire curiosity and a lifelong love of learning in our youngest students.” – *Richard Meyer, Vice Principal, Ronald L. Meinders Primary Learning Center, Stafford Township School District, Ocean County*

“This grant funding will allow us to build a lending library of instructional materials that supports best practices within our own building. By creating access to high-quality resources, we are empowering teachers to strengthen their practice, collaborate more with their colleagues and ultimately enhance student learning across all classrooms.” – *Dana Triantafillos, Principal, Veterans Memorial Middle School, Brick Township Public Schools, Ocean County*

“With this grant support, Claremont Elementary is expanding our courtyard garden into a year-round resource. The grant will bring an addition of a greenhouse and hydroponic growing stations that will offer our students innovative, hands-on opportunities to explore food sustainability and STEAM.” – *Kristin Calhoun, Science Specialist, Claremont Elementary School, Franklin Township Public Schools, Somerset County*

“We are very grateful to Sustainable Jersey for Schools and the New Jersey Education Association for awarding Elizabeth Avenue School this grant to support the creation of its School Eco Club. This club will focus on ecology, sustainability, and environmental impact. I look forward to seeing their outdoor garden take shape, along with

their planned composting and recycling programs, and how these efforts will inspire the Elizabeth Avenue Tigers to become thoughtful stewards of the earth.” – *Dr. John Ravally, Superintendent, Elizabeth Avenue School, Franklin Township Public Schools, Somerset County*

“At Elizabeth Avenue School, we believe that the seeds of change are planted early. When a child kneels in a garden, turns compost into soil, or sorts recycling with purpose, they are not just learning a lesson. They are becoming stewards of the Earth. This Sustainable Jersey Grant is more than funding; it is an investment in the next generation of environmental leaders. Our EAS Tigers have the heart, the curiosity, and the drive to make a difference, and our Green Team has given them the space to grow. Together, we are building a school community where sustainability is not just a subject. It is a way of life.” – *Greg Romero, Principal, Elizabeth Avenue School, Franklin Township Public Schools, Somerset County*

“We are incredibly grateful to Sustainable Jersey for Schools for this \$2,000 award, which allows us to continue maintaining and enhancing our School Yard Garden and Outdoor Classroom, originally made possible nearly ten years ago through their generous \$10,000 grant. Too often, schools receive one-time funding for meaningful projects, only to struggle later with the ongoing costs of upkeep and sustainability. What sets Sustainable Jersey for Schools apart is its continued commitment to long-term impact. Their support recognizes that environmental education and stewardship are not one-time initiatives, but enduring priorities. At Stillwater School, none of what we have accomplished in this area would be possible without their partnership and belief in our mission.” – *Marissa Cramer, Principal, Stillwater Township School, Stillwater Township School District, Sussex*