



Bates Elementary Kinder Garden stemmed from an idea at Bates' end of the year walk through. Mr. Greathead, Mr. Wall, Mrs. Godfrey, and Mr. Belcher of GCA discussed options to update the aging Kindergarten playground and update the overall curb appeal of Bates Elementary School.

Shortly thereafter, a connection was made with Charles Molnar of Sit on it Detroit. Molnar, a Wayne State University student, began a service-driven enterprise building bus stop benches in the City of Detroit from reclaimed lumber. The benches include built-in book shelves which Molnar thinks of as "improvised libraries". His inspiring work encourages literacy and provides relief for public transit riders in Detroit.

Fortunately for Bates, Molnar was willing to put his skills to work on behalf of our students. He constructed nine gardening boxes in the area formerly known as the Kindergarten playground. Each of the grade levels 3-5 have one large gardening box, while the lower elementary grades each have two smaller planting boxes. Additionally, Molnar built four round tables providing an outdoor instruction area and two "Borrowing Benches" where students and parents can enjoy a free lending library.

Fencing was installed around the perimeter of the planting area utilizing the existing brick wall to separate the garden from the walking path. Mr. Mark Salgat, of Woodhaven High School was contacted and asked if he would be willing to assist with a sign to honor the space. Mr. Salgat and his student team including Zach Bullard, Steve Gritz, Tom Bussard, Brendon Watson, Chris Zammit, and Damian Amato stepped up and produced an incredible entry sign that truly represents Bates, and the Woodhaven-Brownstown School District with pride.

In addition to our WHS team, donations and support came from Bates PTO, Bates parents, local community businesses, Representative Pat Somerville, the DNR, and GCA. Western Wayne County's Master Gardener, Nancy Fedon spoke to over 200 Bates parents at the grand opening ceremony on September 11th, 2013 regarding the value of children's gardening initiatives.

The Kinder Garden and the other improvements at Bates are very much appreciated. It is humbling to work in a community that rallies around innovative initiatives for students as we continue our ongoing efforts to engage, enlighten, and empower our students to achieve greatness.