

New Daniel Butler Elementary School Playground
Formal proposal to Belmont School Committee: 9/13/11

The effort to build a new community playground at the Daniel Butler Elementary School actually began many years ago, under the leadership of former Principal Bruce MacDonald and current Butler parent Coralie DiTommaso. Consultants were brought in estimated that a replacement would be needed in 5-7 years. At the time, however, it was estimated that maintenance could be done to temporarily improve the playground, which included a thorough power washing and resealing.

Four years later I arrived at Butler School and in the course of my entry interviews and stakeholder meetings it became clear that there was much support for a renewed effort to improve the playground. That year I assembled a New Playground Committee and we spent much of 2009-2010 meeting with different playground designers, consultants, and construction experts.

In 2010-2011 the Butler PTA and BEDP joined together to pay for the design services of Miller Design LLC, a local design company who also have ties to the Belmont community as parents of students at the Winn Brook School. Miller Design helped facilitate public input meetings – 5 in all – with stakeholders that included Parents, BEDP Staff, Teachers, and Neighbors. They capably walked the committee through the entire design phase. In addition to those input meetings, the New Playground Committee had online opportunities for input, parent coffees, several PTA presentations, and countless e-mail exchanges. We published all playground documents, including responses to every single question we received, online. All playground-related documents are posted on our school website at: <http://www.belmont.k12.ma.us/butler/mews/details.asp?newsid=62>

It is the committee's belief that the final design accurately reflects the wishes of the Daniel Butler School Community, including:

- *Preserving the amount of open “green” space.* The final design represents a smaller footprint than the current playground.
- *Incorporating “green” aspects.* These include outdoor classroom spaces, natural play areas, energy-generating equipment, and equipment from environmentally-conscious companies.
- *Changing the surfacing.* Options include solid turf or rubber instead of the current loose gravel surface.
- *Keeping fundraising expectations minimal.* We are not expecting the town to pay for a new Butler playground, since most of the town's residents will never use it. It is our expectation that it will be privately funded and none of the money will come from town tax revenue. In fact, it is our expectation that *most* of the money will not even come from Butler families. The fundraising group, lead by Jane Fox, is planning on a multi-tiered fundraising strategy including businesses, foundation grants and scholarships, and individual contributions. The PTA can contribute to the project as they deem acceptable, but they are not required to. No bottom line amount has been specified to date, but we are actively searching for

ways to reduce costs to make them as manageable as possible. For example, the idea of a “community built” structure can help save \$8,400 to \$14,300 (depending on the company and the complexity of the equipment).

- *Eliminating any additional parking that appeared in the original proposals.* The designs included represent significant changes from the original designs proposed. We believe that these final designs better reflect the opinions and values of the Daniel Butler School Community.

I am appreciative of the opportunity to bring this proposal to the School Committee on 9/13/11 for your formal consideration. While we are excited to proceed with the fundraising portion of this project, we do not want to do so without the School Committee’s final approval of the actual design.

If I can be helpful in answering any questions or concerns about the process, the actual design, or our plans please let me know. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Michael E. McAllister