

The Boone County Nature School represents a decade-long vision brought to life through collaboration, dedication, and community investment. The idea, initially inspired in 2013 by former Board of Education President Jan Mees and her husband Bill Mees, was to create a place where students could engage in place-based, experiential learning centered around nature. In 2018, a partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) helped transform this vision into reality. Supported by CPS leadership, generous community donors, and organizations like the Columbia Audubon Society, this project culminated in a nearly \$7 million facility designed to serve students from across Boone County. The Nature School now offers integrated educational experiences, allowing fifth graders and other Boone County students to immerse themselves in environmental education and develop an appreciation for conservation and sustainability. Research consistently supports that experiential, outdoor education fosters deeper learning, environmental stewardship, and critical thinking. The Boone County Nature School exemplifies this approach, connecting students to the natural world and equipping them with knowledge and skills that extend beyond the classroom.

Goal - To share how the Nature School provides all Boone County students with hands-on, place-based learning experiences that promote environmental literacy, stewardship, and academic growth. Raise awareness of the Nature Schools role in supporting sustainability and conservation education.

Objective Share the Story (Create Awareness) - Our video will capture the grand opening celebration and the significance of the Nature School project. The video will feature speeches from key figures such as Dr. Brian Yearwood, Jason Sumners of MDC, Vicki Russell, and Reagan Webb, highlighting the collaborative efforts, historical significance, and educational opportunities the school offers. Visuals will include the ribbon-cutting ceremony, student engagement activities, and the breathtaking natural landscapes that make this location so unique. The video will be distributed through CPSTV, social media, the district website, and newsletters to ensure broad community engagement and ongoing awareness.

Key Messages

1. A Legacy of Learning: The Boone County Nature School provides a unique, hands-on learning experience that connects students to nature while promoting conservation and sustainability.
2. Community Collaboration: The school is the result of a decade-long partnership among CPS, MDC, and

community donors who believed in the power of place-based education. 3. Future-Focused: The Nature School prepares students to become future environmental stewards and informed citizens through integrated, year-round learning experiences.

Strategies

1. Digital Storytelling: Produce high-quality video content including interviews with students and teachers that seamlessly blends event coverage with personal testimonials, ensuring the story is both engaging and informative.
2. Multi-Channel Distribution: Air the video on CPS-TV and promote it through internal newsletters and encourage attending schools to share the video on owned social media channels to maximize reach.
3. Engagement: Using the CPS-TV distribution platform, capture viewership information.

Evaluation Since airing on August, 23, 2024, the viewing audience has watched the story 592 times. Additionally, it has been viewed 24 more times on-demand. The video was also shared on the Sharing the Gold internal newsletter.