



LCPS Superintendent, Ralph Ramos, with 5th graders at Monte Vista Elementary



Monte Vista Elementary, Las Cruces
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Las Cruces Elementary School Receives Commitment for Outdoor Classroom Funding
Students Request and Receive a Healthier Way to Learn

[LAS CRUCES] (September 28, 2021) Thanks to the efforts of motivated and dedicated fifth-grade students, Monte Vista Elementary School in Las Cruces will be the first school in the district to build an outdoor classroom. The project began when Monte Vista teacher, Robbi Berry, her fifth-grade students, and other Wild Friends students and teachers from around New Mexico wrote and advocated for Senate Memorial 1, *Task Force to Promote Outdoor Classroom*, at the New Mexico State Legislature, with the support of Environmental Education of New Mexico, and Senator Siah Correa Hemphill (sponsor).

The topic of the legislation was chosen by Wild Friends students across the state, who do hands-on work on civics and science projects, and who had the desire to experience the numerous benefits of learning outside in the fresh air during the pandemic and beyond. Students experienced their first victory when Senate Memorial 1 passed with overwhelming bipartisan support on February 24, 2021.

In a second win for the students, the Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS) district Superintendent, Ralph Ramos, agreed to allocate up to \$10,000 to construct one or more outdoor classrooms at Monte Vista Elementary. Ms. Berry’s students made the request of LCPS by letter earlier in September, and Mr. Ramos made an in-person visit with the students on September 24.

The news comes just in time for New Mexico’s first annual Outdoor Learning Week, which was declared by Governor Lujan Grisham as a result of Senate Memorial 1 and is currently underway this week, September 27-October 1. Monte Vista fifth-graders will mark Outdoor Learning Week by designing an outdoor classroom prototype for their school, constructing a weather station, and creating poetry outdoors. Mr. Ramos visited the class last week to discuss students’ initial plans, and he will visit the class again to see their designs once complete.

Mr. Ramos said that Monte Vista’s outdoor classroom can be a model for other district schools. Ms. Berry’s students hope that their success and space for healthy and engaging outdoor learning will be an example for schools across New Mexico.

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