***Questions and Answer from FGM***

It snows a lot here. Do you have any recommendations for us in our planning with regards to snow?

There is a variety of things you can do with the snow.

 1.       You can embrace it. Maybe when it snows you can use it for learning (science/meteorology, etc.), exercise or team building activities, etc.

 2.       You can leave it. Maybe the outdoor space is just left un-used in the winter due to snow and temperature.

 3.       You can remove it. Maybe the students decide this space is too great to be left abandoned all winter. Removal can be done in a variety of ways –

  a.       Manually, by simply shoveling, or plowing it away.

b.      You can use de-icing compounds (salts/chemicals/sand), but you have to be careful because it could harm the landscape depending on what you use, and what kind of landscape you have.

c.       Or, a snow removal system can be installed. The students can research some of these systems, but I have included links to some examples.

http://www.pentairthermal.com/application/surface-snow-melting/industrial-facilities/

<http://www.warmlyyours.com/en-US/snow-melting>

http://www.warmlyyours.com/en-US/products/radiant-outdoors<http://www.emersonindustrial.com/en-US/egselectricalgroup/products/heating-cables/Pages/default.aspx>

4.       Smart material choices can aid with snow removal – darker paving helps melt snow faster. Smoother paving eases manually removal.

5.       Other. Maybe the students come up with a better solution on their own.

In order to decide what to do about the snow, the students will have to look into user needs, and how this space will be utilized in the winter, or even if it will be. Questions should be asked: During the winter season - How much time to students currently spend outside? Is there a desire to spend more/less time outside? Are there certain activities the teachers/students would like to do outside. Is it safe to be outside? Etc. Also, cost, and removal time/effort are things to consider when trying to decide what to do with the snow.

Who buys the materials we are going to use for the outdoor learning space?

For a project such as this, the contractor will purchase the materials.

I know the outdoor learning space is 30 feet by 30 feet but my group wanted to put bushes around the perimeter. Would there be extra room for that or would the bushes count?

The outdoor learning space FGM has designed is 30 feet x 30 feet of hardscape, with surrounding landscape (beyond the 30 feet). So the answer to your question is yes there’s extra room. FGM, along with the owner (District 41), found roughly 30x30 was a good size for the outdoor learning space, given the needs and available space. However, the students are not confined to these dimensions. They just need to work with the surrounding context and research the user needs. They are more than welcome to expand/shrink/contort to size/layout of the space. Time to be creative, but they should keep in mind the considerations we discussed during the presentation, and the budget.

Could we put in apple trees or are they too much work to take care of?

Apple trees can be used in the design.  The tree(s) will need to be planted in full sun.  Be sure to select a variety that is disease resistant and hardy for our Midwest winters.    Here is a link that might be useful.  <http://www.midfex.org/Home.aspx>  The Midwest Fruit Explorers is a local organization for fruit growing enthusiasts in the Chicago area.  Dwarf varieties are also available which are good for smaller spaces and are easier to maintain and harvest:  <http://www.midfex.org/App_Pages/Yale/intro.aspx>

How do you landscape and what materials do you need?

 Here is a link from the Morton Arboretum on how to install landscape plantings and the materials that will be necessary:   <http://www.mortonarb.org/trees-plants/plant-clinic/horticulture-care/planting-trees-and-shrubs>