



This month read a letter from **Union Township Head Start Center**. They brought *Mother Nature* into their outdoor play space, that the teachers and kids cannot get enough of.

"Thanks to the Head Start Body Start grant we were able to enhance our Head Start play ground from an all rubber surface with very little natural shade and no grassy area for children to enjoy to an exciting play space. The new play space provides many opportunities for our children to explore and discover the world around them. It fosters their sense of curiosity and helps young children to develop an appreciation for the beauty of nature.

The majority of the grant dollars were used for moving a shed, removal of asphalt, rubber surfacing and gravel. We then added topsoil, sod, new fencing, two at-ease wooden benches, and a raised garden bed. The at-ease benches allow the children to relax in a quiet shaded area for reading a book or to participate in outdoor observations of the natural environment. In January 2011, our Head Start teachers participated in two hours of professional development by the HSBS consultant assigned to us. She shared many new strategies of how to use physical development to promote cognitive learning outdoors.

To expand our vision of creating beautiful "natural play scapes" we have collaborated with the folks at PNC Bank and the Cincinnati Nature Center. PNC Bank has provided us with addition funds and volunteers to increase the natural elements to our play space. The Cincinnati Nature Center works closely with the teachers on how to incorporate nature into their everyday teaching practices that promote scientific knowledge and skills. The HSBS grant helped us get the natural play space project rolling and it continues to grow each day making significant changing in the lives of many young children.

Approximately 768 square feet of a new natural play space was added for the children to explore, investigate, observe, and appreciate the beautiful sounds, smells, and natural wonders found outdoors."



