

## School garden entered in contest

By Frank Peebles

Westwood elementary school's garden is well known in Prince George, but there is a chance to grow that reputation across the province.

Children at the school entered their garden in a contest hosted by Science World. The B.C. Green Games showcase youth-driven environmental actions, and part of the competition is done by online voting. It is already underway at [www.bcgreengames.ca](http://www.bcgreengames.ca).

The Westwood garden bid was put together by **Jordan Caron, Braeden Rake, Jesse Rake, Edmond Lo, Carly Frenkel, Ashley Erickson, Chloe Zerr and Melanie Hunter**, all in Grade 7. They produced a powerpoint presentation showing the many features of the large garden wrapping most of the way around their school.

"They were paired up and each one of them did a different component," said teacher-librarian **Diane Sales**. "They did a very thorough and fabulous job. There were a lot of revisions, and it is now up there on the website to see. They were pretty concerned about getting everything in, very conscientious about the order of things so things actually flowed, there was a timeline, a storyline to follow."

If they win the judges' choice award they get \$2,000 cash. If they win the viewers' choice category they get \$1,000, and they are also in the running to win solar panels donated to the school.

The garden, built in several phases since 2006, is still blooming on the school grounds. It started when the pine beetle decimated the pine forest on their school grounds, and when the school district had to remove their aged outdoor adventure playground. The kids started brainstorming with teachers and staff about what could be done to enliven their campus again.

The garden idea emerged, the students invested their own time and talents, called in volunteers and community supporters with gardening expertise and equipment, and slowly a transformation took place.

"Our students shovelled, raked, dug, mixed concrete, made stepping stones, planted and watered until the backbone of our garden was prepared," Sales said. "The project was blessed with wonderful support from our community—everything from donated concrete for our stepping stones, trucking for our hog fuel mulch, and a crane to transport and lift our heavy trees."

It has already won an award, picking up a trophy in the last Prince George Garden Competition. Westwood kids plan another phase scheduled to start this spring.

"We are hoping to finish it this year," said Sales. "We would love to have some outdoor games tables but they are \$2,200 each, and we hope to have one more class of concrete stepping stones to connect the existing trails. Those are things we could use the prize money for."

The students would appreciate the community logging on to the contest website and voting for their entry. Go to [www.bcgreengames.ca](http://www.bcgreengames.ca), click the "register" icon and follow the links.

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