

Dreamacres accomplishments in the school year 2005-2006

- Over 150 trees were planted in the **Outdoor Classroom "forest"** (*Sugar Maples, Shagbark Hickory, American Beech, Ironwood, White Oak, White Pine and Bur Oak*) and in the fenced water run-off area (*Swamp Oak and Pussy Willow*). The large **"Teacher Trees"** (*Sugar Maples*) acknowledge donations to *Dreamacres*. Native shrubs, grasses and wildflowers now blanket the berm.
 - The **water management project** was completed, with 450 rolls of sod laid in the swale and fencing erected.
- **Dig-In** events included general clean-up, installing Butterfly Gardens Memory Stones, fence mending and distributing woodchips.
- At a **Daytime Dig-In** all students planted trees, decorated banners, spread woodchips and planted the sunflower and vegetable gardens under Grade 6 student leadership.
- In their Carnival teams, a **"Nature's Alphabet Scavenger Hunt"** was held in *Dreamacres* for an Earth Day activity.
- Funding for *Dreamacres* was received from the **Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds Program** and generous in-kind donations from supporters including *Davey Tree* and *Ontario Sod*. Donations were also made to *Dreamacres* through sales of the **"Dreamacres" Book** and **Memory Stones**, as well as by many Sunningdale families honouring their teachers in lieu of gifts.
- To enhance understanding of *Dreamacres*, specific issues including 'Blacktop' and 'Lessons from Vandalism' were addressed. (*Refer to the Dreamacres website for this information.*)
- **Year-round commitment to Dreamacres** includes the many dedicated Sunningdale families who weed, water and care for newly planted seeds and trees over the summer months.



How can you support *Dreamacres*?

Please watch for notices about upcoming events and **plan on attending to experience why *Dreamacres* is so special**. Much can be accomplished by volunteers of all ages who contribute time, energy, tools and food to a *Dreamacres "Dig-In"*. Groups as large as 200 people have come out to help at an event! Plans are underway for the **next stages of *Dreamacres* development** which include: permanent seating within the Outdoor Classroom, more bridges, an irrigation system, shade structures, an amphitheatre, a "Sunningdale Sugar Bush", and always planting more trees!

Dreamacres' many components, in addition to sheer volume of hands, require costly materials and equipment. Please let us know if you have:

- **skills of use to the project**
- **contacts** who could assist in securing resources and equipment at trade or special prices
- **corporate connections** ... many local companies are looking to participate in environmental projects in the community.

Please consider **joining the *Dreamacres* Committee**, as support is needed to plan for the future - all are welcome and no knowledge of gardening is necessary!

Dreamacres' success is quite simply the sum of the fantastic energy of so many dedicated, very special people. The beneficiaries are your child and all the students of Sunningdale, who thank you for your support of *Dreamacres*!



Dreamacres Schoolyard Naturalization Project

"L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux"

www.plus-design.com/sunningdale



What is *Dreamacres*? Why is it important for your child?

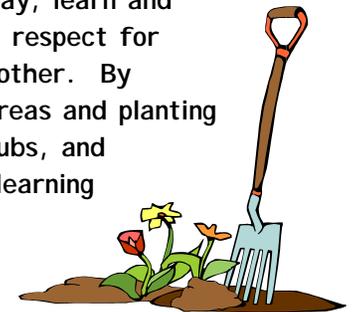
Picture this:

Concrete; chain link fencing; blacktop (shimmering with intense heat radiating into nearby classrooms); no shade to cool the students or protect them from ultraviolet exposure; environments that reinforce bullying; turf that is compacted, dusty and muddy... welcome to a treeless, windswept school ground - a place where your child spends on average 25% of their school day (1,800 hours by Grade 7 alone)!

The above picture is **NOT *Dreamacres*!**

Hopefully you are able to experience the beautiful setting *Dreamacres* offers at our *Family BBQ & Meet the Teacher* event!

Sunningdale has brought nature to its school grounds and has been transformed into a dynamic outdoor learning environment. By providing such a variety of healthy, safe and natural play spaces - all children can feel comfortable to play, learn and develop a genuine respect for nature and each other. By creating theme areas and planting native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers, the learning opportunities for students literally come alive!



For our Grade One families, and those new to the school, you need to know about *Dreamacres!*

- In 1996, Sunningdale embarked on a project to 'naturalize' the school grounds, under the passionate leadership of Grade One Teacher, Mme Linton. A 10-year plan envisioned transforming the schoolyard into an inviting play place and a natural learning environment.
- All Sunningdale students were involved in a



visioning project, which asked them to visually depict their "ideal schoolyard". Many elements were consistent across the visioning designs, such as a desire for trees, flowers, gardens, pathways and seating.

- The project was named "*Dreamacres*" following a school-wide naming contest.
- Well over 6,000 student, teacher, parent and community volunteer hours have been contributed to *Dreamacres*.
- Sunningdale students and their families have been a vital part of *Dreamacres* since its inception – preparing the initial site inventory, being part of the visioning project, constructing the Sunflower and Butterfly Gardens, planting seeds, trees and other plant materials, and finally supporting the on-going watering and maintenance, essential to sustain the project.
- *Dreamacres* offers an open-air classroom to teach environmental studies and earth sciences components of the Ontario curriculum.



Teachers enhance existing curriculum by exposing the children to hands-on mathematics, art and science challenges relating to the school grounds. Outside the walls of the school, a class can also find a shady spot for a change of scenery from the classroom!

To date, components of the *Dreamacres* plan completed include:

- Annual planting of Sunflower & Vegetable Gardens
- Building split cedar rail fences
- Hours of chainsaw work notching logs for seating and gardens
- Spreading tons of woodchips which very effectively alleviate the mud and dust challenges in the schoolyard, while aiding the renewal of compacted soil
- Planting a Climax Forest (*maple and beech*) and a Primary Forest (*birch and trembling aspen*)
- 1000 student-planted perennials
- Transforming a slope of compacted grass into a Native Butterfly Garden with barrier free "Memory Walk"
- Planting 20 shade trees (*maple, red oak and tulip*)
- Improving drainage throughout the schoolyard – rain and melting snow used to leave the schoolyard sodden, muddy or icy for days/weeks and now it is ready for play within hours
- Constructing two bridges to enhance access and link play areas
- Developing an "Outdoor Classroom" which, once the plantings are established and the protective fencing is removed, will be a forest with trails to explore and shaded seating!



- Since its inception, *Dreamacres* has been awarded over \$24,000! Financial support has come from Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds, Sunningdale School Council, Shell Canada Environment Fund, Canada Trust Friends of the Environment, Ford Oakville Assembly Plant, Toronto-Dominion Bank, CN and Panasonic. Support in 2005 alone, in terms of financial awards, donations in-kind and discounted expenses, exceeded \$15,000! *Dreamacres'* ability to attract such contributions is testament to its profile within our community and naturalization projects across Canada.
- *Dreamacres* is a multi-award winner! Recognition, including an Award of Distinction (for a project of provincial importance) from the Halton District School Board, acknowledges what is behind *Dreamacres* – a long term plan, offering diversity of activities and design elements, implemented with energy and commitment by Sunningdale staff, students, their families and the community!
- School-wide special events in *Dreamacres* have offered a variety of environmental activities and provided unique opportunities for co-operation, creativity, learning and fun.
- In 2004, a Grade 2 textbook, "*Dreamacres*", was published by Thomson Nelson in their "Being Part of a Community" series. Available for \$10, the story of our *Dreamacres* project is beautifully captured and is a great souvenir of Sunningdale.
- During any nutrition break it is obvious how much the students love *Dreamacres* – they welcome the shade and enjoy the range of natural play spaces... *and more is planned!*

