

## Principal's Message



### Heather's Getting a PlayPod !!

“Let’s pretend play” . . . yet increasingly we are finding many children no longer know how to just play. We’ve been observing this on our own playgrounds over the years, especially with our younger children and our children with special needs. Heather has a wonderful campus. It’s spacious, sporting two

playgrounds and two play structures and a huge green field to run and play in. But our playgrounds are not very conducive to our younger learners’ needs. Our playgrounds have a lot of blacktop with four square, basketball, handball, and tetherball courts, and while many children play sports or use the play structures, many children look for other options during recess. We have a ton of space, but are in need to provide space and materials to support and foster “just play”-- especially imaginative play and play that will support children at all levels of social skills. Then we learned about PlayPods!

### 21st Century Learning

We first learned about PlayPods at the district’s Celebration of Innovation last spring, an annual staff event of sharing innovative ideas and practices in schools and classrooms across the district. White Oaks School shared their PlayPod project and we thought, “This would be perfect for Heather!”

The playpod concept fits well within our school district’s [Strategic Plan](#), which focuses on the skills and conceptual tools that are critical for 21st Century learners. We see it as an important vehicle for providing children opportunities to enhance the 5Cs: Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, Citizenship, and Creativity. The PlayPod will provide an environment for students to think more creatively, working and playing both cooperatively or independently. As they encounter problems, the PlayPod environment will help them learn how to solve problems using critical thinking as well as social-emotional skills. The PlayPod area will provide students with a unique/open ended area for play.

### The best way to describe a PlayPod is to see one in action.

- First, prime your thinking by watching this one minute video, "[Not a Box](#)".
- Next, find 5 minutes to watch at least half of this 10-minute video from the U.K., or maybe all of it: [ScrapStore PlayPod in Action](#).
- For photos of PlayPods in action, check out this [collection](#).

### Heather's PlayPod Planning

We presented the PlayPod concept to both PTA and SSC and there was a lot of enthusiasm to go forward. Our Heather PTA has started by funding a large, 10 x 10 Tuff Shed ([something like this](#)), which will be installed up alongside the Room 22 portable on the upper playground. Thank you Nikki Rooker for coordinating this order. We expect delivery on May 24. Teachers and I applied for a SCEF Innovator's Education Fund grant and received funds to seed the project with a shopping spree to Home Depot to buy materials to get us started, as well as funds to release teachers to take a couple of "teacher field trips" to see PlayPods in action. We visited Paragon Preschool during their discovery zone time and then White Oaks Elementary during their lunch recess when their PlayPod was open for action.

### What's Next?

Please consider getting involved by working with us in finding and equipping our PlayPod with materials to stimulate creative play- the sky's the limit (almost)! We will have a vetting process in place for parents who have items from home to donate. So we don't end up storing rummage that we can't use we will set up a process of emailing a photo of items to donate.

### Needed: PlayPod Patrol

Please consider volunteering next year during lunch recess as part of our PlayPod Patrol to help supervise safe and fun play.

Have ideas? Want to get involved? Contact **Nikki Rooker, Meredith Park, Corbie Kiernan.** or **Pam Jasso.**

We are all very excited to get it going!

Pam Jasso

Principal