



\_\_\_\_\_, Principal  
Your School Name  
Address

Dear Principal:

The Dyck Arboretum of the Plains, in Hesston, Kansas, is inviting K-12 teachers to apply for the 2024 Earth Partnership for Schools (EPS) Program. The program begins with a one-week institute, June 3-7, 2024, in which we train school teams of 2-6 teachers about prairie restoration. They learn about cultural and natural history as they do hands-on curricular activities. Developed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum since 1991, EPS has become part of the curriculum in over 200 schools in Wisconsin. UW-Madison Arboretum chose Dyck Arboretum to be one of five regional facilitating centers in 2005 to begin expansion of the program on a national scale. Sunset Elementary School in Newton (started in 2006) was the first EPS pilot program and since then (2007 to 2023), 351 educators from 101 new Kansas schools/education entities have benefited from involvement in EPS. The Kansas EPS Program is now in its 17th year.

The EPS Summer Institute shows teachers how to restore a native habitat garden on school grounds and teaches a broad range of subject matter. The EPS teacher professional development model has proven to be effective in increasing teacher collaboration and improving student learning. While focusing on ecology, native habitat gardening also incorporates subjects such as mathematics, history, science, social studies, language arts, art, and music. EPS works with schools restoring schoolyard habitats and improving K-12 education by engaging students in hands-on/minds-on learning. Dyck Arboretum staff will provide services, training, and consultations worth approximately \$15,000 and help with finding available \$ from various sources for seeds and plant materials. Participating teachers can earn Friends University graduate credit (3 credit hours at \$85/credit hour) if interested.

EPS offers teachers the EPS curriculum correlated to Common Core/Next Generation Science Standards, substantial support, training, and expertise as they work with students to create a native habitat garden on school grounds. The program provides:

- Three Friends University graduate credit hours for each teacher who attends the week-long EPS Summer Institute, June 3-7, 2024, if they want it
- one-day follow-up winter meeting in January
- professional, on-site consultation by Arboretum staff for the native garden site
- ongoing support to participating schools
- guidance and leadership for a prairie field trip
- school-wide in-service opportunity
- assistance with achievement of funding for plants

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Arboretum staff will work with teachers to help them and their students envision, design and undertake a cooperative ecological native garden at their school. Before the institute, we will schedule a date and time for a site visit to meet with you and your teachers if desired to share expectations and address questions or concerns.

We ask that the following requirements be met to satisfy guidelines from our funders and our desire to maintain a high-quality program:

1. Each participating school will provide space (area to TBD by school team) that is suitable for a long-term native habitat garden.
2. The school commits to the development of a native garden at the school and its subsequent use as a teaching tool in keeping with the school's long-range plan, professional development plan, and mission.
3. Schools will form a planning team to infuse and integrate the native habitat garden project into the school's curriculum.
4. Schools will provide substitute teachers for the one-day winter meeting (date to be determined at summer institute) and allow for an in-service and project planning time.
5. Our funders at times request evaluation of Earth Partnership for Schools Program activities. Your school may be asked to participate in program evaluations and/or to provide classroom and student assessments. In no case will student names be required.
6. We may take photographs of students participating in the native gardening process and permission to use those photos is assumed unless alerted otherwise.

We are very excited about this opportunity and look forward to working with your teachers and school. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 620-327-8127 or e-mail: [brad.guhr@hesston.edu](mailto:brad.guhr@hesston.edu). Consider soon how a team might be put together at your school so you can be involved in this next EPS group. Limited team spots are available. Sign up today!

Sincerely,



Brad Guhr  
Earth Partnership for Schools Program Manager  
Dyck Arboretum of the Plains

I have read the above and understand the requirements of the program:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Principal Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Principal Name, PLEASE PRINT)