



## Dos Rios students gain range of experiences while creating Sensory Garden at PLC

**October 30, 2009** – Dos Rios Elementary School students are learning about science, sustainability and citizenship as they build a Sensory Garden at the Poudre Learning Center. On this field trip, the students built a retaining wall, planted bulbs, and collected animal adaptation data. When in full bloom the Sensory Garden will have plants, flowers and vegetables that children will be able to explore, touch and enjoy. The garden is designed for young, pre-school-age children and children who are blind, deaf, or use wheelchairs.

The seeds of inspiration for the project were planted last summer, when Dos Rios fifth-grade teacher Lynn Perrich traveled to Costa Rica with a number of science teachers from the Poudre School District to learn ways of teaching about travel and to engage in service learning projects. “All through our trip we learned that much of (the local population’s) lives and livelihoods revolve around sustainability with everything they grow and raise,” Perrich said. “There is little waste and more reusing of plant material. It was fascinating.”

The educators’ own service learning project was to build, by hand, a 50-foot sidewalk for a school that has children walking alongside busy traffic. Perrich brought those experiences back to Greeley and Evans and set out to create a project for her Dos Rios students. She applied for and received a Littler Foundation grant which allowed them to get started with plant materials, soil, mulch and compost. Meanwhile, she worked with the staff at Poudre Learning Center to design the special-purpose garden.



Dos Rios students have been out to the center twice to work on their project during field trips, and a few other times through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century after-school program. Most recently was Oct. 27, when they finished the raised beds, built brick walls, dug new walkways, transplanted soil, made compost, and planted some of the fall plants and bulbs for the winter.

The students have also worked on the garden during after-school programs and will continue tending it through the winter months, with a major planting effort set for next spring. Next summer, the PLC will host classes during which students will have the opportunity to continue their project. “Our hope is to have this be a sustainable project where students will come out with their families and help take care of the garden,” Perrich said.