



Endhaven Elementary is using the grant to make its playground and campus safer. Picture are Braxton Slack (from left), Jacob Kiser and Laila Afzal.

Photo by Ray Sipeasy

# Needs are Beyond Elementary

## Endhaven Receives \$25,000

WHILE BALLANTYNE-AREA SCHOOLS ARE RECOGNIZED as some of the top performers within Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, local elementary schools often need assistance to excel. Many of the 28277-based schools serve beyond their intended capacities and require additional resources to create optimal learning experiences.

The Bissell Cos. Inc., developer of Ballantyne Corporate Park, recently reached out to local elementary schools with an opportunity to receive a \$25,000 grant to fulfill school-specific needs. Bissell coordinated a selection committee to review applications and award the money as a holiday gift on behalf of tenants in Ballantyne Corporate Park.

Endhaven Elementary won the grant for updated playground equipment and to provide a safer environment for its students. The

“I believe that my most important job is to keep my students safe in a nurturing environment at school,” says Brian Slattery, principal at Endhaven Elementary. “When we do this, we give students the best opportunity to be successful learners.”

Slattery further supports the importance of playgrounds during the school day. “Research supports (that) healthy, active children learn better. Exercise promotes learning and developing the whole child.”

Meanwhile, other school applications echoed the need to improve playgrounds, with unstructured playtime cited as “crucial” by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Elon Park Elementary requested enhancing its playground equipment to help meet growth challenges while creating a space to foster a healthy and neighborly international community.

Polo Ridge Elementary also needs a playground that can accommodate its growing student body while supporting its commitment to promoting healthy lifestyles. In addition, a sunshade for its outdoor classroom environment would significantly aid its science, technology, engineering and mathematics program.

Providence Spring’s application focused on experiential learning. With an outdoor classroom to house year-round N.C. native plants, a miniature bird sanctuary and supporting educational materials, the school wants to take advantage of collaborative instruction while creating real-world experiences.

Hawk Ridge Elementary identified a need for a Learning Commons, an innovative space that encourages a high level of collaboration. Ballantyne Elementary’s application spelled out a variety of needs — more access to current technology, curriculum-based literacy materials and a school garden, which could support its science program and grow food for the community.

These school needs are reminders for the community to be aware of public education challenges and informed about elective officials at all levels of government. The needs also provide a wealth of opportunities for other groups to step forward and help children of the community. As Slattery notes, “The quality of education will directly impact our community in the future.”



Photo by Ray Sepasy

Howard Bissell (from left), Smoky Bissell and Hailey Rorie (far right), all from the Bissell Cos., present Endhaven Principal Brian Slattery with the ceremonial check.

school’s critical need for grounds improvements to prevent additional injuries to children resonated with the selection committee.

With the gift, all dated and unsafe playground equipment at Endhaven will be removed and replaced with more current equipment. The funding will also enable the school to begin addressing drainage issues around its grounds, another area with unsafe conditions (due to erosion). A safe and appealing playground and surrounding grounds will not only benefit the students but local children for years to come.



This rendering shows the type of playground equipment coming to Endhaven.