

February 26th, 2026

Dear ÉMJS Community,

Over the past four years, the PAC has been fundraising towards the vision of creating an outdoor classroom and ecological learning space that would allow students in our school community to play, learn, explore, gather and connect with nature. We are so grateful for the incredible support and generosity shown by our families which has allowed us to fundraise an astonishing amount of money through our Walk-A-Thon fundraisers. Not including last year, the previous Walk-A-Thons have been dedicated to this project and our school community has raised over \$90,000! During this multi-year fundraising effort this project was divided up into three phases, the first step of which has been to determine the outdoor classroom structure.

Our current Executive team is committed to providing clear, transparent information and communication to our school community throughout this process. As we look ahead we want to ensure that our efforts reflect the priorities of our entire school community, and we are now seeking your engagement and feedback to ensure these funds will meet the original goal of this project—to help children learn and explore in nature. We also want to acknowledge that during this project our school staff and PAC executive board have changed multiple times. As volunteers cycle on and off the board, there has been a turnover in leadership, and with that there has been evolving information and changes in details as time goes on. Our current exec team has managed to move Phase One forward as previously agreed upon, from a vision on paper to the actual planning process with SD61 facilities. We have dedicated a lot of time and effort navigating the many regulations we must conform to in order to build and fund this structure. We learned that in order to get a firm price on this project we had to have architectural drawings completed by an architect who works for SD61 to ensure all regulations and codes of the school board are followed. These drawings have been completed and were submitted to SD61 facilities who must be the ones to construct the building and have now given us a final price for this outdoor classroom structure. This information has been discussed during our monthly PAC meetings.

When this project was first introduced, the estimated cost brought forth to the community was significantly lower than what we now know the true cost of construction to be. Unfortunately, multiple things have affected this difference, such as rising construction costs and limitations on the design of the building to ensure we adhere to the SD61 building codes. We now know that this outdoor classroom structure would require substantially more funding than originally anticipated and we are currently looking at an estimated \$100,000 shortfall. While we have raised meaningful funds, we have not yet reached an amount that makes the outdoor classroom feasible. There is a possibility to complete this structure in phases and pay for the portions we are able to fund—for example, the foundation at this point. Our PAC Chair is planning on having a meeting with SD61 facilities regarding this final quote and to gain clarification on what our options might be.

We are disappointed (and frustrated) to learn that we are so significantly short to make this a reality, but we are committed to finding a solution that works for our community and to come up with a concrete plan. Therefore, we are asking families to take the time to fill out a short survey to help us determine if families would like to continue pushing forward, and continue raising funds for another estimated 4-5 years to try and reach this goal. Or whether it may be time to pivot and direct the funds already raised towards a smaller but attainable project that still aligns with our vision to support outdoor learning at EMJS.

With our largest annual fundraiser, the Walk-A-Thon, coming up, your input is especially important as we are currently in the planning process. We want to know your thoughts about what this year's fundraising efforts should support. Please complete the survey as soon as possible! Your voice matters and together we can make the best decision for our students and our school community.

Here is the link to fill out the survey: <https://us16.list-manage.com/survey?u=63aab2d1baa3fb928a5635602&id=0e3565034f&attribution=false>

If you have any specific questions or want to learn more, this will be discussed at our next PAC meeting which is also our AGM scheduled for Monday April 27th at 7pm via zoom. Our PAC Chair, Stephie, is also happy to connect with parents and can be reached at contact@emjspac.ca

Thank-you for your support and understanding!

ÉMJS PAC EXECUTIVE TEAM (2025/2026)

(Below is a picture of the building taken directly from the architectural drawings as well as where the planned location is)

