



For Immediate Release

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Three Hamilton County Schools Receive Funding for Active Outdoor Spaces

County Grant Program Provides Funding to Expand Learning Opportunities

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN (July 23, 2026) — Hamilton County Mayor Weston Wamp, the Hamilton County Health Department, and Hamilton County Schools today announced the recipients of the 2026 Active Outdoor Spaces (AOS) Grant Program, awarding funding to three Hamilton County schools for projects expanding learning, recreation, and play.

The three selected projects reflect the program's focus on expanding inclusive, hands-on outdoor learning and recreational opportunities for students. Projects include Hunter Middle School's Cason's Courtyard, an inclusive sensory garden and ADA-accessible playground; Calvin Donaldson Elementary School's Active Outdoor Learning Campus; and Big Ridge Elementary School's Outdoor Learning Center pavilion and arboretum.

"Giving our students and teachers spaces where learning can continue outside the classroom was the motivation behind creating the Active Outdoor Spaces program," **said Hamilton County Mayor Weston Wamp**. "After visiting every school in Hamilton County and hearing principals' ideas for activating underutilized spaces, we worked with the Health Department to create a grant program to bring those ideas to life, because every parent wants their child to have opportunities to be active and outdoors throughout the school day."

In its second year, the Active Outdoor Spaces Grant Program continues Hamilton County's commitment to investing in student health and creating opportunities that will benefit generations of learners. Administered by the Health Department, the program builds on six successful projects funded last year. This year, three additional schools will each receive \$40,000 to transform underused areas into spaces where outdoor learning and recreation go hand in hand.

"At the Hamilton County Health Department, we believe that healthy communities begin with healthy children. The Active Outdoor Spaces Grant allows us to partner with schools to transform underutilized outdoor areas into spaces that promote active play, learning, inclusion, and overall well-being," **said Crystal Howard, Director of Community Health Services, Hamilton County Health & Social Services Division**. "We are honored to support each school throughout this process, from planning and design to

implementation, and help turn their vision into reality. We are excited to award up to \$40,000 to each of the three schools and look forward to seeing the lasting impact these spaces will have on students for years to come.”

At Hunter Middle, Cason’s Courtyard will honor the memory of a beloved former student while creating a space where students of all abilities can play, explore, and connect. The sensory garden and ADA-accessible playground will feature adaptive play equipment, including a wheelchair swing.

“At Hamilton County Schools, we are working to provide kids with healthy and active opportunities during the school day, because we know these conditions are essential to learning,” said **Dr. Justin Robertson, HCS Superintendent**. “The Active Outdoor Spaces Grant awards for Hunter Middle, Calvin Donaldson Elementary, and Big Ridge Elementary are really exciting. By creating safe, welcoming outdoor spaces for learning, play, and connection, we are investing in the well-being of our students and school communities. We are grateful to the Hamilton County Health Department and the Mayor’s Office for their partnership.”

Construction is expected to begin within the next six to eight months, with all three projects anticipated to be completed by May 2027.

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