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Students' dreams come true in new Frank Wagner school playground

Monroe, WA – ZipKrooz, Odyssey Tower and SwiggleKnots sound more like characters from fantasy literature than a wish list for a new Frank Wagner Elementary School playground. Thanks to winning a \$200,000 Healthy Kids – Healthy Schools grant from the state, Frank Wagner Elementary schools entirely new playground is far from a fantasy.

Devlin Piplic, director of facilities for Monroe Public Schools, led the efforts in preparing the winning the grant and then worked with Frank Wagner students to design the area. That process began last spring with students reviewing potential improvements and suggesting their choices for new equipment. Kindergartners submitted pictures and drawings, and the older students used the playground equipment catalog to research top picks.

"I think we should definitely have a ZipKrooz because it will help us strengthen our muscles;" "The Odyssey Tower has three slides, a bridge and climbing activities ... it exercises your body." "SwiggleKnots challenges yourself by trying not to fall and helps you work on your balance" were strong reasons students provided for their suggestions to their school principal, Vikki Berard. The student council leadership tabulated the final student requests and submitted the list to Piplic.

Frank Wagner had playground equipment installed when the modernized school was completed in 1989, explained Piplic. In fact, the equipment was so old that it had become impossible to find replacement parts, he said.

Berard had planned to work with the school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and gradually replace one item at a time. "It would have taken a long, long time," noted Berard. "By the time we'd get all those same pieces it would need updating again!"

Piplic says "pretty much" all the things the kids wanted are in this new design. Equally important is double the amount of play stations allowing more children to be active. "The kids are very excited about it – I know that for sure." said Piplic with a smile. His office borders the school's playground area.