

Denver Public Schools Facilities Maintenance Weed Control Pesticide Free Lawn Pilot Conclusion

March 24, 2014,

This is the conclusion of the DPS Weed Control Pilot Program. It has been concluded that the two pilot schools did show more weeds and as a result the turf was not as thick and durable as the control sites. At this time DPS cannot maintain the legal and safe play needs of the fields without the continued proper use of synthetic pesticides. DPS is now partnering with CSU extension to further develop our IPM program and are also working with Golf and Sport solutions to develop better soil conditions to further improve turf health and reduce need for pesticides.

Below are the results from the May, 2013 survey:

- 1) As of the start of the Weed Control Coalition, in July of 2011, DPS no longer uses the product 2,4-D in our broadleaf weed control program.
- 2) During the summer of 2012 DPS sent out a weed control RFP and received 2 bids back. One bid from TruGreen and one bid from Ground Services Co. with bidding request for synthetic based pesticide application and also for Organic non synthetic pesticide weed control. It was determined that the organic option was cost prohibitive at an additional cost to the district of \$846,104 per year with the lowest bidder and \$1,844,161 more expensive for the second bidder. If in the future cost effective methods of Organic weed control become an option we will reconsider.
- 3) We have had mixed results to date with the 4 pilot schools but we are continuing the same pilot program for a second year. We want to observe the long term results. We still are running Edison and The Denver Green School free of Synthetic pesticides, Ellis is still being spot treated with synthetic pesticides, and Smith is still our designated control school receiving broadcast spraying of synthetic pesticides. All 4 schools show little weeds on their fields due to the heavy use and foot traffic. None of the 4 schools have had any weed treatment in 2013. On Tuesday 5-28-2013 I checked all 4 pilot sites and found the following:
 1. **Edison (Synthetic Pesticide Free)**- Field is showing stress and wear from heavy use which is expected for a site with a field this size containing that many students. The field wear is typical for a DPS elementary school. Aeration and fertilization is scheduled. The front lawn and right of way lawns are showing broadleaf weeds such as Dandelions, Plantain, Crabgrass, Prostrate Spurge, and some Puncture Vine.
 2. **Fallis (Synthetic Pesticide Free)**- Field is showing the same stress from wear but it is now accelerated since the cottage was built and the field size was reduced. Aeration and fertilization is scheduled. The front lawn and right of way are showing some Dandelions and Crabgrass but not as much as Edison's site.
 3. **Ellis (Synthetic Pesticide Spot Treating Only)**- Field is showing stress and wear from heavy use which is expected for a site with a field this size containing that many students. The field wear is typical for a DPS elementary school. Aeration and fertilization is scheduled. The front lawn and right of way show little weeds. The grass area on the west side of the site by the garden which appears to be receiving less maintenance and use is showing a considerable number of Dandelions, Foxtail, and Crabgrass. The overall appearance of the weed conditions are better than both Fallis and Edison.
 4. **Smith (Standard Synthetic Pesticide use as Control)**- Field is showing stress and wear from heavy use which is expected for a site with a field this size containing that many students. The field wear is typical for a DPS elementary school. The right of way and front lawn areas show some Dandelions but they are not as dense as on the other 3 sites. There were not as many other types of broadleaf weeds as seen on the other test sites even in the stressed or bare ground areas where foot traffic has killed the sod.
- 4) DPS is still working with CSU to expand our IMP program and reduce the use of pesticides at our schools. Mike Swankhouse and Josh Griesbach have been working with the CSU extension office and Agfinity to increase our education on Pesticide Applications and safety.

Photos of Edison



Photos of Denver Green School (Fallis)



Photos of Ellis



Photos of Smith

