



Indianapolis Public Schools

**Riverside Elementary  
School #44**

2033 Sugar Grove Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 26202  
<http://www.ips.k12.in.us>

TEL 317-226-4244  
FAX 317-226-3469

February 17, 2012

Carrie Harris, MSED  
IUSM Division of Diversity Affairs  
Medical Science Building, Room 209  
635 Barnhill Drive  
Indianapolis, Indiana 26202

Dear Ms. Harris and Committee Members:

Imagine a school where 97% of the children qualify for free breakfast and lunch, 89% of them live in female, single-head of household families, and the in-house mental health counseling program serves 25% of at least one kindergarten class and has a long waiting list for services. Come visit a place trying to serve as a safe haven for a community where, historically, the children's transience rate at the neighborhood school has been 105% annually. The effects of such unrootedness and unsettledness are difficult to counter, but a library is the one "sameness" among schools when these sweet children are adrift in life. Some of the same faces will be among the books at every new library our children visit. Children learn early that books are uncritical friends, ready to take us to worlds beyond our own, helping us experience life as we may never have known it.

Riverside Elementary School, IPS #44, has some of these wonderful friends for the children. As facilitator of the visits the classes make each week to the Media Center, I have dreamed for years of converting the open area in the back of the library into a place to where children can escape with a book, a place they can curl up in a comfortable corner and travel to far away places, meet new people, and make new friends. I had a unique opportunity to interview Bill Martin, Jr., renowned children's author, when I was in high school. I was deeply impressed by his charismatic storytelling and his recounting of experiences in the Bureau of Indian schools. I was deeply moved by the images of children flowing between reading rooms, curling up in clubfoot bathtubs or perching in actual tree lofts found among the classrooms of the otherwise austere Bureau schools. Children climb into new worlds even as they climb into secure, comfortable reading areas. Children's hearts climb to new heights of hope and desire when nestled in a safe place that nurtures those hopes and desires.

It is, then, with eager anticipation, School #44, Riverside Elementary, submits this application for funding for a Ben Carson Reading Room. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

C. Christine Wynne  
Project Coordinator/Media Assistant  
Riverside Elementary School

# **Ben Carson Reading Room Project Proposal**

---

**Riverside Elementary School  
IPS #44**

**2033 Sugar Grove Avenue  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46202  
317-459-6753**

***Dajuan Major, Principal  
Christine Wynne, Project Coordinator/Media Assistant***

## **Where will the Reading Room be located in your school?**

Riverside Elementary is fortunate to have a fairly spacious room for its Media Center with room to grow its collection and services. At the back of the Media Center in a clearly visible, yet removed portion, there is an extended recessed section with a lowered ceiling and bounded by a low wall and a neighboring slightly smaller area bounded by a sturdy magazine display shelf. The two areas are approximately 10'-by-8' and 5'x8', respectively. The ceilings are approximately 10' high. The low dividing wall is approximately 4' high and 5' long. The reading room can be set apart easily in different ways, but we are proposing to install a low wall along the outer portions and extend them upwards with clear Plexiglas. The two reading sections would allow an ebb and flow between them and a differentiation of functions which will be detailed in the next section of this proposal. A double-wall Plexiglas partition will be erected on the dividing wall, inside which will be a permanent exhibit of South Pacific seashells donated by the estate of Mrs. Naomi Fisher Campbell, former Women's Editor of the Indianapolis Star (IN) and Muncie Star (IN) newspapers.

The expectations for the Ben Carson Reading Room as established by the project terms and conditions will be easy to meet. Access to the Reading Room will be through the Media Center and the Room will be visible to the Media Center staff; therefore, it will be easily supervised at all times and available at all times Monday through Friday, before, during, and after school. Every class is scheduled for a Book Exchange time once a week, which will be a prime time opportunity to reward children with time in the Reading Room. Another excellent opportunity will be during the frequent after school parent meetings when parents can be directed to one-on-one time with their child/children in the Reading Room, supervised by teachers, Title I faculty, community volunteers and/or other staff. There can be read-ins, overnight storytelling times, scheduled and supervised use by after-school programs (like Girls Scouts for a reading badge). It is a newly reconstructed school building, one of the newest in the district, and serves a very strategic neighborhood, so it will not likely be vacated anytime in the near future. Additionally, it has always been the policy of this Media Center, its staff, and the District, that reading is never to be used as a punishment.

Recordkeeping regarding the use of the Ben Carson Room will be a delight to comply with – for the Fund's purpose and for the school's purpose. Our intention is to issue passport replicas to each student and as they are admitted to the Reading Room, their "passport" will be stamped. A wall-sized world map will be directly outside the Reading Room and students will be encouraged to either choose a country they are "pretend" visiting or to identify where the material they read takes place and use that as their passport destination. Passports are stamped upon exit and date and time length recorded, along with name or number of material read, in a "Passenger Log." Younger primary-aged students will be assisted with this process and have it modified as need determines.

There will be a number of ways in which the Reading Room will be maintained and refreshed. For maintenance, the regular school staff will provide daily upkeep. It will also be set up for a student committee to establish a routine for students to assist in the daily maintenance and upkeep. If there should be a student who disrespects the Reading Room in any way, they will be asked to make restitution by means of either monetary or community service payment. Humiliation or shaming will *not* be the goal, but rather a building of character, a sense of righting a wrong, and learning the strength of an apology.

### **Detailed Design/Construction/Theme of the planned Reading Room project.**

We know that if we THINK BIG, we will be well on our way to achieving our goals. Student ideas were solicited for what the Reading Room theme should be. Entire classes at every grade level were interviewed and engaged in facilitated discussions. Teachers and staff contributed ideas and helped refine student ideas. Early sketches were drawn, students and school employees canvassed again, and ideas further refined. Then out of the three major ideas that arose, one final one was voted on by nearly every class and every grade. The sketches for the three semi-final ideas are attached in Appendix B. The Ocean Theme won the final vote and all ideas were compiled. A student was selected by the art department to sketch in greater detail the proposed Reading Room project. The students and teachers wanted a wooden sailing ship extending from the wall, small in scale that allowed students to sit inside on “bunks” for reading and a few to climb on deck to curl up there to read. The vision the students asked for was to have well-cushioned barrel chest chairs and an ocean mural painted on the wall merging the 3-D ship with the mural, including a sea captain with Dr. Ben Carson’s face and a speech bubble with the Think Big acrostic, masts with cloth sails and more “distant” masts with painted sails. Maybe Dr. Carson will still be able to send us a life-sized shadow image of himself that we can post beside the huge wall map, maybe an arm outstretched, pointing into the distance!

### **Knowing there are cost and time limitations, the final proposal is this:**

A large, 7’ high x 8’ long heavy cardboard boat will be halved and placed on the overhang outside the entrance to the reading room. Between the two halves will go the banner with a phrase like, “Come Sail Away.....” To the left of the entrance will be a full-wall sized world map. Anyone facing the entrance will see low walls, about 3’ high. Plexiglas will go from the wall and extend up to meet the overhang. The main room will have the two large walls covered with an ocean photo wall mural. The third wall, an already existing, 4’ wall, will have a sandy beach background with a large magnetic whiteboard mounted permanently on the wall. We will have magnetic letters and words the children can use to create words, sentences, poems, ideas, etc., based on what they are reading or just creatively. Placed against the low wall will be several child-sized bookshelves. The room will have bean bag seats, child-sized chaise lounges, and maybe a child-sized, metal-framed hammock, all for idle time relaxing while reading. Along the shortest length wall will be what the students named “The Continental Shelf.” It will be a series of three low, wide steps allowing for several uses: curling up on for reading, standing on for oral reading or reciting, or small group play production (something the children have begged for endlessly). Extending up from the low wall to the ceiling separating this room from the smaller room beside it will be a double-thick Plexiglas wall separated by a space. Between the walls will be staggered clear Plexiglas shelves on which will be placed the various shells found in the extensive collection of South Pacific shells donated by the estate of Mrs. Naomi Fisher Campbell (1929-1990), former Women’s Editor of the Indianapolis Star (IN) and the Muncie Star (IN) newspapers and international freelance journalist. Mrs. Campbell’s children attended IPS schools in the 1960’s and she was a huge supporter of education. She became Director of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, International Division, a position she held at the time of her death. The clear Plexiglas walls will permit viewing of the shells and other ocean objects.

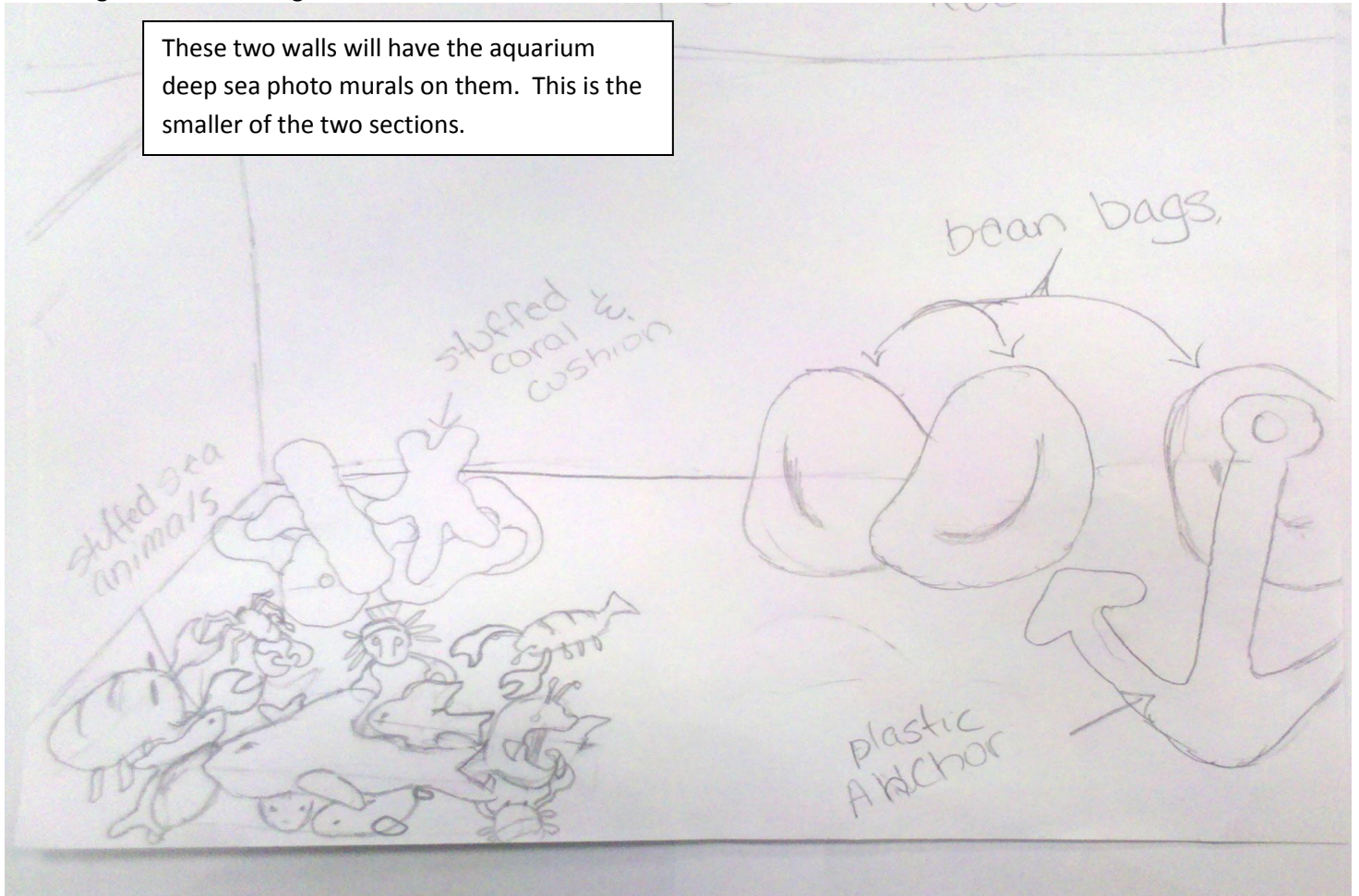
The second, smaller room is approximately 7’x5’. The students in the planning stage dubbed this the “Aquarium” and, variantly, the “Coral Room.” This room will permit *only* silent reading. The students proposed stuffed coral-looking pillows that Velcro to the walls all around the room and can be removed to allow curling up with for reading. Precluding this, there will be ocean-toned bean bags, stuffed ocean animals, and a plastic anchor and/or other ocean/sailing themed items. Bookshelves will line one of the three walls, as well as be placed along the low wall closing off the front. The remaining two walls will have a Deep Ocean photomural that fits with the coral and aquarium concepts. Both rooms will have small CD players for ocean theme music. The smaller room will have a listening station that will allow 2-4 students to use headphones to listen to the orchestral/ocean-themed music as they engage in silent reading, shutting out any of the sounds that might wander over from the larger, adjoining room.

The following, annotated pictures will help complete the picture of our THINK BIG dream:

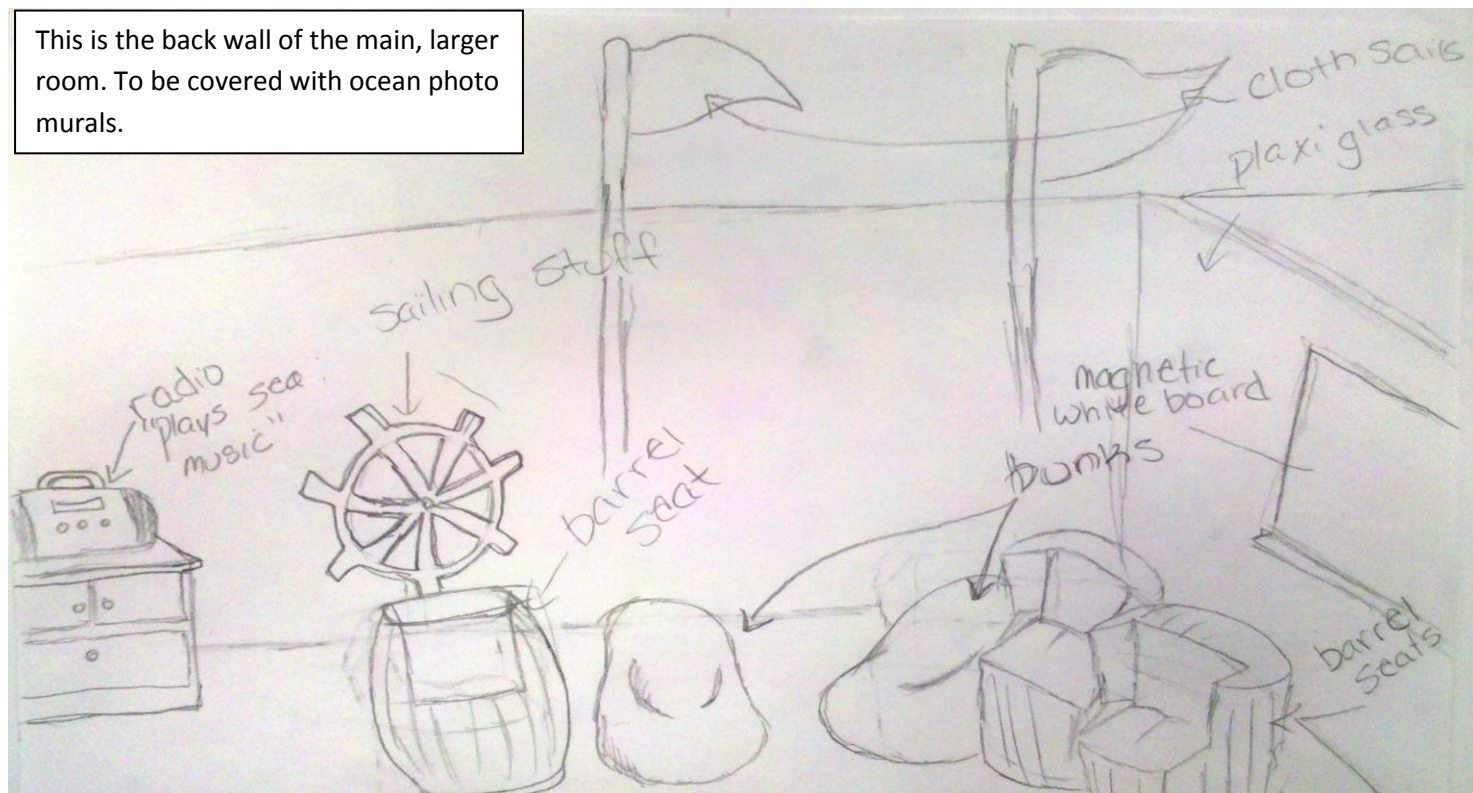


Student-generated drawings

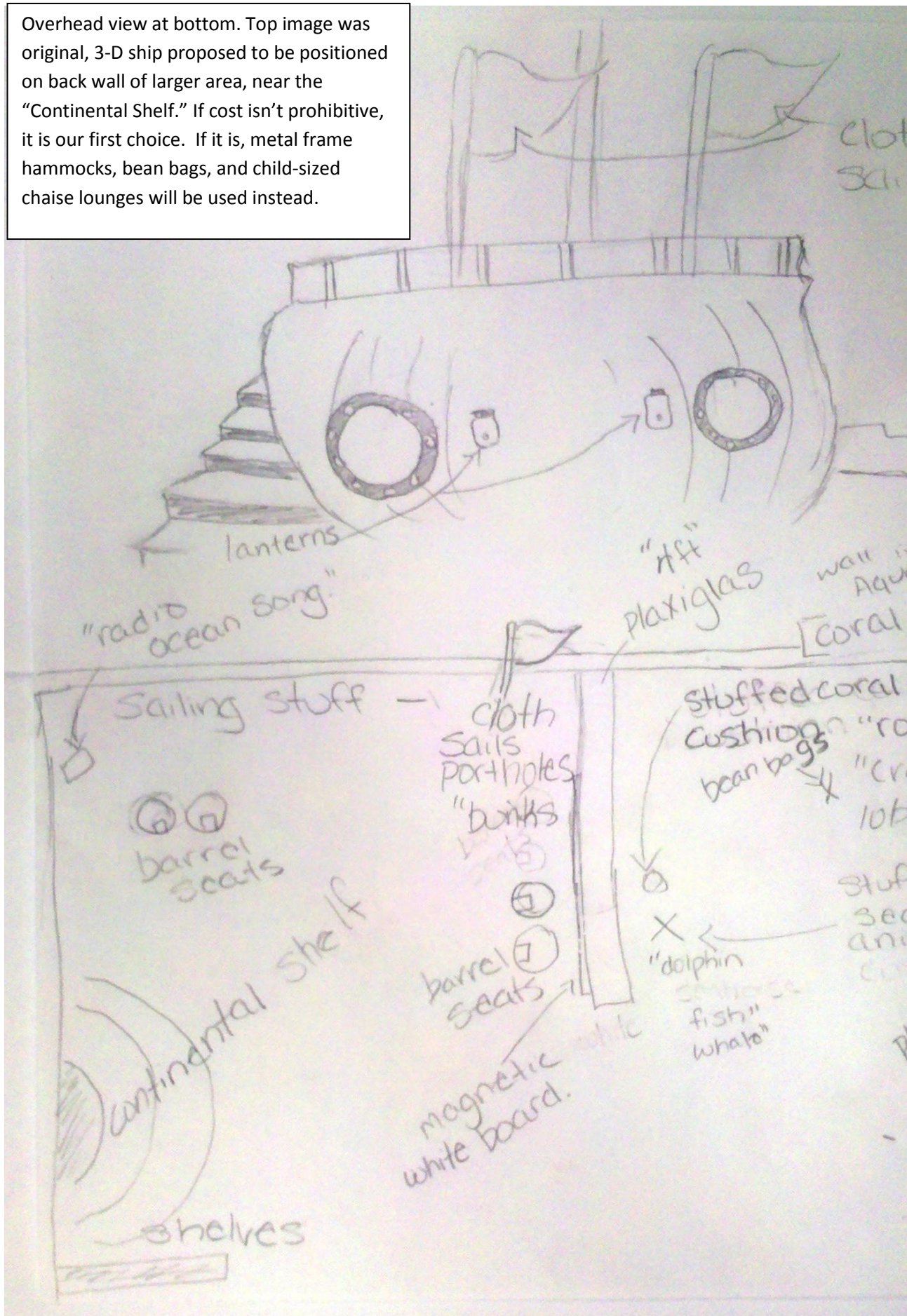
These two walls will have the aquarium deep sea photo murals on them. This is the smaller of the two sections.



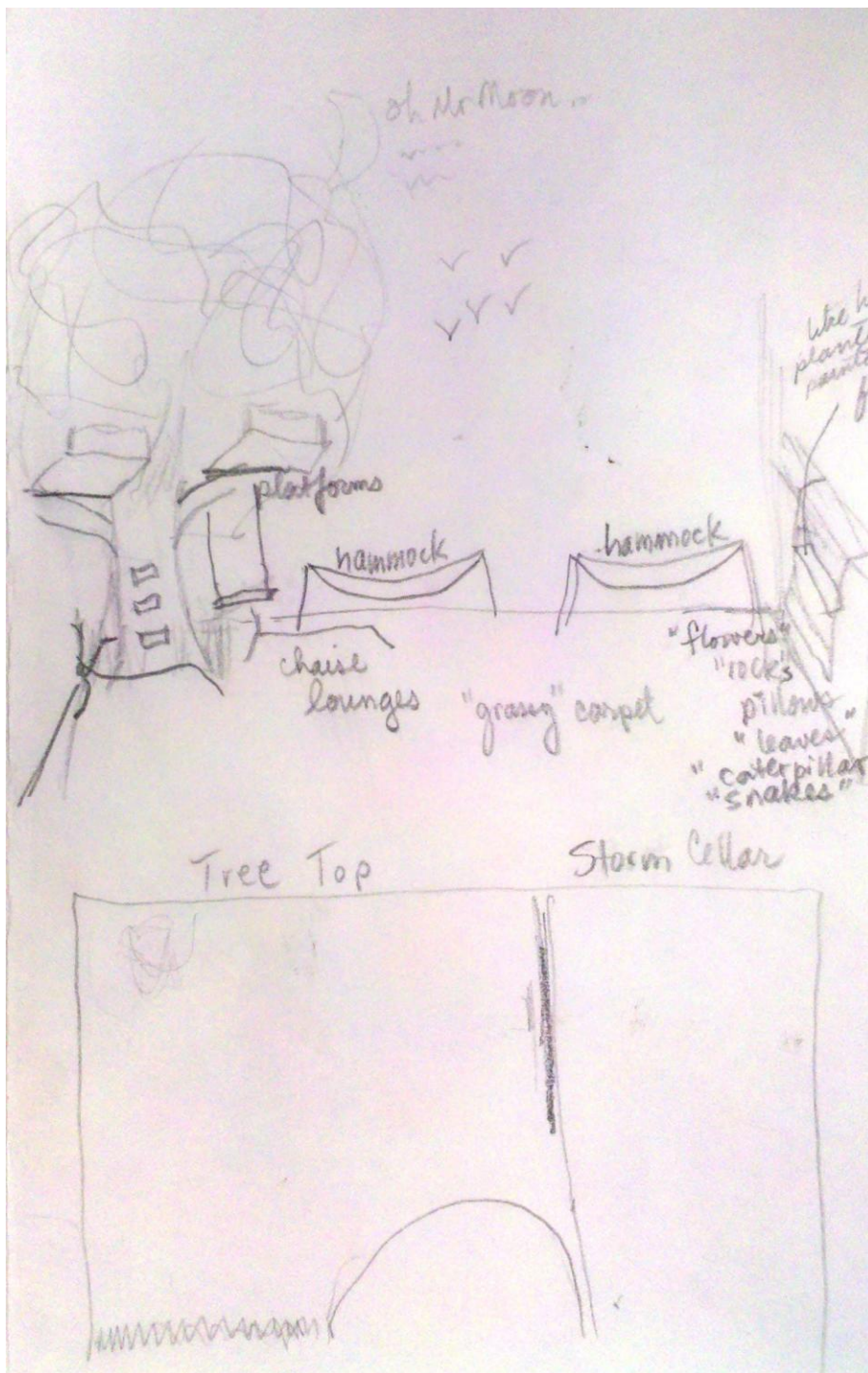
This is the back wall of the main, larger room. To be covered with ocean photo murals.



Overhead view at bottom. Top image was original, 3-D ship proposed to be positioned on back wall of larger area, near the "Continental Shelf." If cost isn't prohibitive, it is our first choice. If it is, metal frame hammocks, bean bags, and child-sized chaise lounges will be used instead.

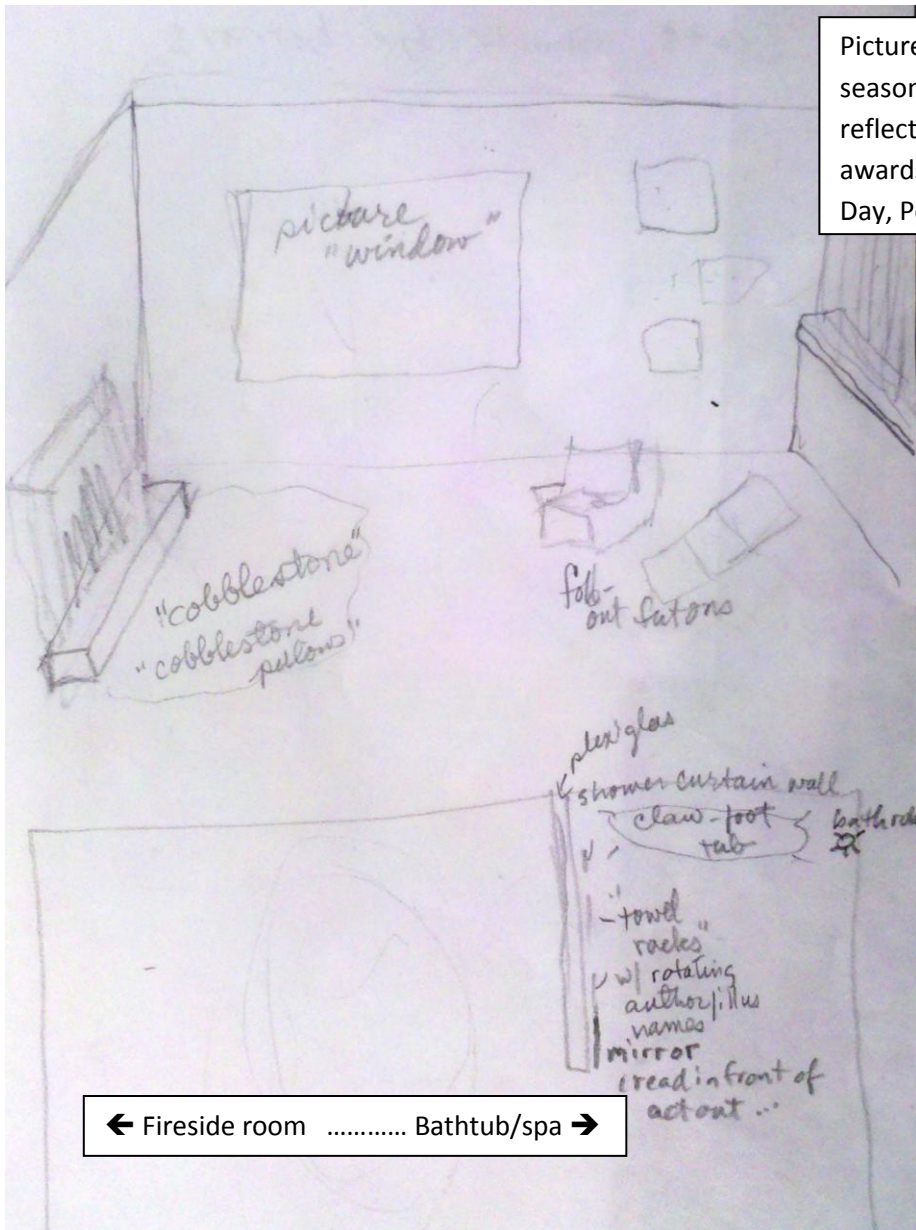


Two original alternate ideas proposed by students and staff:



Tree Top Room with arbor trellis at entrance to the room.

Picture window could be changed with the seasons. Wall photos would change to reflect monthly celebrations (student awards, Black History images, Presidents' Day, Poetry Month, etc..... ).



← Fireside room ..... Bathtub/spa →

## **How much support personnel will be involved in the day-to-day operation of the room?**

The day-to-day operation of the Ben Carson Reading Room will involve the Media Specialist and Media Assistant every day from before school to after school hours. Every teacher will be involved directly at least once a week when they bring their class to the Media Center for the weekly Book Exchange period. Children will be able to use the Reading Room during this time under the supervision of the library staff and the classroom teacher. Additional opportunities will occur during the additional Media Skills class session each class has during the week led by the Media Specialist. Throughout the day, children will be able to come with their passport and the room will be supervised by one or both of the library staff, other staff, community partners and volunteers, and possibly trained, supervised older students. Staff will need to ensure the room is used appropriately, materials kept put away properly and replenished, orders placed for replacement supplies, items cleaned, sanitized, and/or laundered as needed (we have an in-house washing machine for school use). Maintenance staff will vacuum and dust after school and clean Plexiglas as needed.

## **How will the students in the school be involved in planning, implementation, and opening of the Reading Room?**

The students have already been highly involved in this pre-planning stage. It is a room *for the children, of the children, and by the children*. They have provided ideas, contributed possible themes, helped narrow the choices, refine the three semi-finalist ideas, and then selected through a vote. An exceptionally artistic sixth-grader was agreed on as the one to put the final ideas on paper with feedback and editing offered by many others.

For the implementation stage, several fifth and sixth graders can be chosen to help complete the orders and invoices, helping in the process with the final selection of materials and resources. A small team of writers will be assigned to record the process and write it up for the monthly school paper, including taking in-process pictures. Students can help create and place some of the items for decoration.

Opening day! Students! Students! Students! The tentative plan they have discussed involves a small group using the “Continental Shelf” to singing an ocean/sailing themed song, another small group to recite a “choral” piece or poem, and a staged read-in, possibly using some of the new books if they are received with time to prepare. They want to have an ocean-themed welcome party using the six large tables already in the Media Center, covered with ocean-themed party decorations, serving a simple, student-made “Sandy Dessert” for a small fee (first fundraiser!) and tropical punch.

## **How will the Reading Room be funded after our first initial start-up?**

In terms of maintaining the resources over the years, special events, fundraisers such as Book Fairs, and the continued receipt of donations of new and lightly used books will help replenish the reading collection, as well as the reading incentives items. Bookmarks will be a major, consistent reading incentive offered and are already highly coveted by the students. In addition, pencils, erasers, and other school supplies are also in high demand at this school. Suppliers like Oriental Trader and retailers like Dollar Tree are fabulous, low-cost resources. We also have Teacher’s Treasures for IPS teachers. Whatever is chosen, it will be non-food, unless healthy fruits or vegetables. KickStart.com and DonorLive.com will be set up with requests, as well. Community partners can be solicited for donations, as well as can local businesses, universities, and programs such as athletic teams and youth organizations.