



## School Nominee Presentation Form

### ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATIONS

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#### School and District's Certifications

The signatures of the school principal and district superintendent (or equivalents) on the next page certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of their knowledge. *In no case is a private school required to make any certification with regard to the public school district in which it is located.*

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades early learning to 12.
2. The school has been evaluated and selected from among schools within the Nominating Authority's jurisdiction, based on high achievement in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental and sustainability education.
3. Neither the nominated public school nor its public school district is refusing the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district wide compliance review. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is not subject to the jurisdiction of OCR. The nominated DoDEA schools, however, are subject to and in compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements to comply with Federal civil rights laws.
4. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the public school district concluding that the nominated public school or the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan to remedy the violation.
5. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the public school or the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
6. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the public school or public school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or public school district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.
7. The school meets all applicable federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.

#### U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools

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Name of Principal: Ms. Tiffany Johnson

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name: J.G. Whittier Elementary School

(As it should appear on an award)

\**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space*

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

A handwritten signature of Ms. Tiffany Johnson in black ink.

Date: January 20, 2022

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Instructional Superintendent: Ms. Tenia Pritchard

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in official records)

District Name: District of Columbia Public Schools

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

A handwritten signature of Ms. Tenia Pritchard in black ink.

Date: January 20, 2022

(Superintendent's Signature)



### Nominating Authority's Certifications

The signature by the Nominating Authority on this page certifies that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of the Authority's knowledge.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades Pre-K-12.
2. The school is one of those overseen by the Nominating Authority which is highest achieving in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental and sustainability education.
3. The school meets all applicable federal civil rights and federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.

Name of Nominating Agency: DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education

Name of Nominating Authority: Tia Brumsted

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify to the best of my knowledge that the school meets the provisions above.

  
 (Nominating Authority's Signature)

Date: 2/15/2022

### SUBMISSION

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The nomination package, including the signed certifications, narrative summary, documentation of evaluation in the three Pillars, and photos should be submitted online according to the instructions in the Nominee Submission Procedure.

OMB Control Number: 1860-0509  
 Expiration Date: December 31, 2023

### Public Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1860-0509. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 37 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain benefit P.L. 107-110, Sec. 501, Innovative Programs and Parental Choice Provisions. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202-4536 or email ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference the OMB Control Number 1860-0509. Note: Please do not return the completed ED-Green Ribbon Schools application to this address.

## SUMMARY NARRATIVE

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In 1926, J.G. Whittier Elementary School opened its doors to the Manor Park residential neighborhood of Washington, DC. Whittier Elementary School is a neighborhood school of the Brightwood community of Washington, DC which serves over 360 students in pre-K to Grade 5. For the past fifteen years, we were an educational campus that served students in pre-K to Grade 8, but recently transitioned back to an elementary school when our brand-new middle feeder school opened directly across the street. In 2019, the chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) recognized Whittier Elementary School on the first day of school for our academic assessment results of 17.2 percent gains in English/language arts and 11.6 percent gains in mathematics. As a community school, Whittier has seen generations of families walk through its doors. With several local parks, gardens, bike lanes, playgrounds, and community spaces within walking distance, Whittier students are immersed within and care about their local community and environment. We use the community as a voice to solve the problems that we not only see in our community but the world today. From gardens to markets to social projects, we engage our community in many ways.

Over the past three years, Whittier Elementary School completed a major shift in our academic programming to center on STEM, with a focus on Urban Sustainability. With strong support from the principal, our STEM coordinator has successfully led the effort to leverage partnerships that complement our desire to create systems and sustainable practices in our school and our community. Our school Green Team, which consists of our Garden and Recycling clubs, and has members who are teachers, paraeducators, community members, and students in Grades 2-5, also contribute to this work.

Over the years, we have been able to make incremental changes to improve our building and grounds to be more environmentally sustainable. In 2020, our Energy Use Intensity (EUI) was 60.2 and our greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) emissions per square foot was 3.3 KG/SF, with a total of 223 metric tons for the year (fewer emissions than comparable buildings in Washington, DC). Our school is compliant with the Building Energy Performance Standard (BEPS), with an Energy STAR Rating of 65, which falls above the median for schools (rating of 36) in the K-12 category. Cost-effective energy-efficient upgrades were made to Whittier's HVAC Systems to increase fresh air filtration throughout the building through an existing Dedicated Outside Air System and the installation of high efficiency MERV-14 and HEPA filters. Additional environmental improvements to our school campus have included installing new water fountains with the no-touch bottle-filling function, removal of compacted space to plant a pollinator garden, and planting trees to provide shade and absorb stormwater runoff. Our outdoor classroom and school garden areas were recently expanded to include additional raised beds, learning stations, a garden waste compost bin, and seating areas.

Waste reduction is a whole school effort that involves the principal, teachers, building services and kitchen staff, and students. In every classroom and hallway, there are receptacles and signage for recycling and landfill waste. During the 2018-2019 school year, our Grade 2 Green Team students led the effort to provide every classroom with a recycling bin to begin in-class recycling. During our lunch block, our student Green Team assists in separating our waste, recyclables, and compostable items. Additionally, we began composting food waste in our cafeteria during all three lunches, an effort led by our third-grade students. In the cafeteria and near our front entrance, you can find a "share table" for those who may not have enough or may want more. The school administration supports recycling and composting efforts by helping model the practice in the school cafeteria during meal clean up times. In 2021, Whittier Elementary School was recognized by the Department of General Services with the *Recycle Right Award: Most Replicable Solution Award* for our efforts to remove black bags from our recycling bins. This change made the recycling bins more distinguishable from the trash bins, which helped improve sorting in both bins.

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, our students and staff began using EPEAT Gold Rated workbooks, tablets, and mobile phones. This greener technology reduces our energy consumption, uses less water during the production

process, and decreases landfill waste. Whittier is located close to a metro station and Capital Bike Share station, and is in close proximity to Rock Creek Park and the Metropolitan Branch Bike Trail. Student involvement has resulted in us purchasing more bike racks to encourage our community to travel to work/school other ways besides driving.

Since 2007, Whittier Elementary School's garden projects have ranged from a small pollinator garden, eight garden beds, to outdoor classrooms. Our school has partnered with *FRESHFARM FoodPrints* to work with all our pre-K through Grade 5 classrooms weekly, by embedding comprehensive food education with the goal of improving health and academic outcomes for children and families. Whittier Elementary School students leave with a greater knowledge and willingness to eat nutritious, climate-friendly foods, all the while cooking some of the vegetables and herbs that they have grown in the garden. As a Title 1 school, free breakfast and lunch are provided for every student in the school. During physical education class, second grade students learn how to ride a bike through a DCPS program with the DC Department of Transportation (DDOT). DDOT provides bicycles and helmets for students to learn hand signals and road safety rules, and celebrate their learning by riding bicycles to a park for half a day.

Whittier Elementary School aims to service the whole child and to support this, our students' socio-emotional needs must be met. We have a behavioral health team that meets weekly to discuss the needs of our students. The school's behavioral health team includes a restorative practices coordinator, mental health therapist, school social worker, and counselor, all of whom can provide therapy and support for any student who wishes to speak to them regarding any mental health concerns. We incorporate a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program to ensure an easy and effective way to reward students for exhibiting positive behavior that is responsible, engaging, and accepting. Staff wellness is important at Whittier Elementary School, and it starts from the top. Our principal provides daily wellness tips; our staff lounge has been updated to include staff favorite snacks; an open-door policy for staff, students, and families by administration; and well-planned monthly staff engagements that build comradery amongst our Whittier family by our Sunshine Committee.

The building services team at Whittier Elementary School is trained in green cleaning procedures as well as deep cleaning protocols using EPA approved cleaning supplies that follow CDC guidance. Whittier Elementary School engages in these sustainable cleaning practices through *EcoLogo* and *Green Seal* certified products. Per DCPS-wide directive, all classrooms, publicly shared administrative spaces, and large spaces such as gyms, cafeterias, and libraries received HEPA Filter units to promote indoor air quality and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in 2020. Similarly, HVAC filters were upgraded to MERV-13 and 14 filters when possible and are replaced regularly. Lastly, the school was enrolled in an indoor air quality program that now tracks key indoor air quality metrics such as CO<sub>2</sub> levels.

Whittier Elementary School provides support to families with referrals for mental health services, housing, food, domestic violence resources, clothing, and legal support which can be found on our Family Resources page on our school website. To support our families struggling with food insecurity, we partner with *the DC Food Project*, a local nonprofit that gathers donated food through partnerships with various other nonprofits and businesses in the district to give out at schools and pass out bags weekly to families. This also helps us reduce food waste.

Throughout the course of the academic school year, Whittier Elementary School students participate in a plethora of activities that assist us in becoming more sustainable individuals who live more sustainable lifestyles. To support our Urban Sustainability goals, we place an emphasis on our environmental education efforts and have built relationships with numerous community partners. Our STEM curriculum incorporates *STEMScopes* and *Project Lead the Way: Launch* modules, and all student projects are aligned to solve environmental issues that we face in our everyday lives. The STEM coordinator participated in the Office of the State Superintendent of Education's (OSSE) Environmental Literacy Leadership Cadre, a program that encourages teachers to develop a school-based environmental literacy plan for students in all grades. Other teachers have received Project the Way leader certification and professional development

for garden-based learning, to make our required experiential learning activities easy tasks. Whether through our Science Fair where ALL students (Grade 1-5) had to select an action project that affected our environment, classroom projects with our partners, or working on end of module projects, our students have learned what it takes to have a positive impact on our environment. In February 2021, Whittier Elementary School held our first Sustainability STEM Fair virtually with sustainability partners and organizations from throughout the city who engaged our students in two separate hour-long sessions with hands-on demonstrations and explorations. We are the only school (elementary, middle, or high school) in Washington, DC, and its surrounding area to host a fair of this nature to shine light to how we can love our environment.

Whittier Elementary has also participated in OSSE's annual *Growing Healthy Schools Month* for the past three years and has been recognized for our efforts. In 2021, Whittier was recognized by OSSE's *Capital LEAF (Leaders in Environmental Actions for our Future)* program for healthy, green, sustainable schools. Capital LEAF encourages the development of healthy school environments and helps schools to document their progress to increase sustainability and environmental education efforts and empower youth to take actions that will reduce environmental impact and improve the health and wellness of their school and community.

We are continuously working on more ways as a community to become more innovative and sustainable in our everyday practices, and we will continue to grow and develop as a STEM program. As we continue to grow as a school and community, we will see even more shifts and changes in the landscape of both our school and community. We hope that other schools will see Whittier Elementary School model as a resource to grow and support their urban sustainability efforts.

## NOMINEE INFORMATION

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**School, District (LEA), or Postsecondary Institution Name:** Whittier Elementary School

**Category of Nomination** (School, District, or Postsecondary): School

Address: 6201 5<sup>th</sup> St. NW City: Washington State: DC Zip: 20011

Twitter: @WhittierECStem Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WhittierEC/>

**Top Official** (School=Principal; District=Chancellor/CEO; Postsecondary Institution=President)

Title: Ms. First Name: Tiffany Last Name: Johnson

Position/Role (Principal/ Chancellor/ CEO/ President): Principal

Email: [Tiffany.Johnson3@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Tiffany.Johnson3@k12.dc.gov) Phone: 202.576.6156

**Lead Applicant** (if different)

Title Mr. First Name: Kerel Last Name: Thompson

Position or Role (e.g., Teacher/ Sustainability Director/ Facilities Director): STEM Coordinator

Email: [Kerel.Thompson@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Kerel.Thompson@k12.dc.gov) Pone: 202.207.5774

**Check all that apply:**

Early Learning X

Elementary X

Public X

**Provide percentages, if any are relevant to your school, district, or institution:**

Pell Recipients: N/A

Free and Reduced Price Lunch: 93%

Limited English Proficient: 25%

Minority: 64% Black/African-American; 2% Asian;

Special Education: 23.29%

2% Multiracial; 26% Hispanic / Latino; <1% Native

Graduation Rate: 100%

American / Alaska Native; <1% Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander; 7% White non-Hispanic

Attendance Rate: 89.86%

**Provide the following:**

Total Enrolled: 360 Number of Schools: 1 Buildings: 1 Campuses: 1

# **DOCUMENTATION OF SUSTAINABILITY ACHIEVEMENT**

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## **Pillar I: Efforts to Reduce Environmental Impact and Costs**

At J.G. Whittier Elementary School, we pledge to provide students with academic inquiries that catapult their pursuit in greater understanding that is bias-free in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), pioneering new self-exploration, discoveries, and contributions to their community. We believe that our students will be the pillars to our community and promote sustainable practices not only in our local, but global community. The Academic Leadership Team (ALT Team) at Whittier Elementary consists of our principal, vice-principal, instructional coaches, special education coordinator, and STEM coordinator. The ALT Team meets regularly to address school-wide systems, which have included environmental and sustainability efforts such as recycling, composting, and eco-friendly upgrades.

### **Energy Efficiency Practices**

As of January 2021, Whittier's metered Building Energy Benchmarks followed the District of Columbia's sustainability plan (*Sustainable DC 2.0*) to reduce citywide greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption by 50 percent by the year 2032. With 66,000 square feet of gross floor area, our Energy use Intensity (EUI) was 60.2 in 2020. Our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per square foot was 3.3 KG/SF in 2020 with a total of 223 metric tons (MT) for the year. (The average comparable building in Washington, DC emits 4.36 GHG per square foot.) Whittier Elementary School is compliant with the Building Energy Performance Standard (BEPS), with an Energy STAR Rating of 65, which falls above the median for schools (36) in the K-12 building category. The electricity provided by *Potomac Electric Power Company (Pepco)* is powered by a fuel mix that over time has progressively decreased its share of coal while increasing its share of renewable resources. The District of Columbia requires that all electricity within the city come from renewable energy sources by the year 2032

In 2020, cost-effective energy-efficient upgrades were made to Whittier's HVAC Systems to increase fresh air filtration throughout the building through an existing Dedicated Outside Air System (DOAS) and the installation of high efficiency MERV-14 and HEPA filters which help earn points toward possible LEED green building certification. Each classroom has its own HVAC system unit with MERV filters that continuously and efficiently circulates fresh air into the classroom, and each space has its own heating and cooling control panel. HEPA filters have also been placed throughout the building. The *Department of General Services* performs yearly maintenance, confirms registers and diffusers are not blocked, disinfect and cleaning of air handling equipment, and visual inspection of air distribution mechanisms in walls and ceilings to maintain energy efficiency over time. A Demand Control Ventilation System (DCV) is in place allowing ventilation rates to be adjusted according to the number of occupants in various areas of the building to reduce energy use and minimize costs. In addition, a wireless platform is being used to ensure proper operation of equipment and maintain energy efficiency.

Our building services team does a great job of ensuring that classroom lights are turned off in all classrooms at the conclusion of each day. Additional efforts to promote awareness of energy consumption have included Whittier's participation in the *PEPCO/National Energy Education Development* Energizing Student Potential program since 2018, which partners with local elementary and schools to provide fun interactive lessons and hands-on learning kits that power students to be smart energy savers. This provided an opportunity for our Grade 5 students to learn about the exciting world of electricity and ways to save energy and money.

## **Water Quality and Conservation Efforts**

In 2007, Whittier partnered with the *Department of Energy and Environment* to create a School Conservation Site, a project to reduce stormwater runoff. This project removed approximately 150 square feet of compacted space by the basketball court and installed a pollinator garden with a rain gauge, bird baths, walking paths, and raised beds. In November 2021, our fifth grade students with our local partner, *Casey Trees*, planted eight trees on the side of our school, which will provide some shade and assist us in cutting back some of our energy usage and absorbing stormwater runoff. In the building, new water fountains were recently installed with no-touch bottle-filling function.

## **Green Technology**

Whittier Elementary School maintains a fleet of 200 EPEAT Gold Rated workbooks and tablets as well as 7 EPEAT Gold rated mobile phones. The decision to use EPEAT rated products results in energy savings of 12,990 kWh of energy savings over the useful life of the product and results in cost savings of about \$479. Additionally, these EPEAT rated products resulted in the reduction of 30,000 liters of water during the production process and avoided the creation of 56 kg of waste from landfills. EPEAT products are more sustainable because all EPEAT products must conform with certain required and optional criteria that promote sustainability in areas such as design, production, use, toxicity, energy consumption, water use, packaging, and end of life disposal.

## **Waste Reduction Activities**

Each week during a scheduled staff meeting, our STEM coordinator provides updates and professional development in conjunction with the *Department of General Services* (recycling and composting education), *Department of Energy & Environment* (Sustainable DC), and the *Alice Ferguson Foundation* (Trash Free Schools) to our entire staff. This helps our staff better understand what local policies and services exist to reduce the impact of waste for our school and community.

Led by the efforts of our STEM coordinator, the Whittier staff (building services and kitchen staff) have systems in place for waste management throughout the building. In every classroom and hallway, there are receptacles and signage for recycling and landfill waste. Whittier's Green Team consists of our Garden and Recycling clubs, which consist of teachers, paraeducators, community members, and students in Grades 2-5 that meet regularly to discuss the management of the garden and our recycling program. During the 2018-2019 school year, our Grade 2 Green Team students led the effort to provide every classroom with a recycling bin to begin in-class recycling. The school administration supports recycling and composting efforts, particularly modeling the practice in the school cafeteria during meal clean up times. The school food program engages the entire school community and has evolved over time to address waste by allowing students to return unopened food in a food safe manner, cafeteria/kitchen composting, and the incorporation of recyclable and compostable disposable items. During our lunch block, our student Green Team assists in separating our waste, recyclables, and compostable items. The job is important because it allows the students to take ownership in reducing our waste. Additionally, we began composting food waste in our cafeteria during all three lunches, which was led by our third-grade students. In the cafeteria and near our front entrance, you can find a "share table" for those who may not have enough or may want more.

In our school garden, you will find our composting bin that was constructed in partnership with *Out Teach & Target* that can be accessed by the community, staff, families, and neighbors. With the assistance of the *Department of General Services*, we were able to schedule a weekly pickup of our cafeteria compost. We are proud to contribute to the DC community with the Department of Public Works, which provides up to five 32-gallon bags of compost to residents.

All pre-K through Grade 5 students learn about recycling and waste in their science class and through visits with our community partners, *Alice Ferguson Foundation* and the *Anacostia Watershed Society*. In 2020, Whittier Elementary School participated in the *Alice Ferguson Foundation's* Trash-Free School, which engaged students in action projects to

prevent litter, clean up waterways, and ensure healthy communities in the District. In partnership with *FRESHFARM Food Prints*, students learn about the impact of food waste on our planet, complete food waste audits, and participate in taste tests aimed at encouraging students to eat more of the elements on their plates.

We currently have school-wide initiatives to highlight waste, such as our annual Sustainability STEM Fair, Earth Week, and community clean-ups which are promoted through assemblies, partner visits, newsletters, and social media posts. In 2021, Whittier Elementary School was recognized by the *Department of General Services* with the *Recycle Right Award: Most Replicable Solution Award* for our efforts to remove black bags from our recycling bins. This change made the recycling bins more distinguishable from the trash bins, which helped improve sorting in both bins.

### **Transportation Alternatives**

Whittier Elementary School is ideally situated for multiple modes of transportation alternatives, including the Fort Totten metro station (1.7 miles away), has a Capital Bikeshare station, four different bus stops, and proximity to the Rock Creek Park and the Metropolitan Branch Bike Trail. As we aim to limit the emissions that we let off into the environment, we have placed two bike racks in the front of the school building for students, staff, and parents to utilize. In the spring (April-June), we have multiple *Walk, Train, Bike, or Carpool to Work Days*.

## **Pillar 2: Efforts to Improve the Health and Wellness of Students and Staff**

### **Student Health and Wellness**

In 2018, Whittier installed a school garden with eight garden beds, and through our partnership with *Out Teach*, we recently built two outdoor classroom garden spaces. During the 2020-21 school year, we partnered with *FRESHFARM FoodPrints* who works with all our PreK-Grade 5 classrooms weekly, by embedding comprehensive food education with the goal of improving health and academic outcomes for children and families. Through their interdisciplinary, standards-based curriculum, students can learn both in the kitchen and in our garden. Whittier Elementary School students leave with a greater knowledge and willingness to eat nutritious, climate-friendly foods, all the while cooking some of the vegetables and herbs that they have grown in the garden. During weekly garden education classes, students in pre-K to Grade 5 can integrate gardening, cooking, and nutrition education into the curriculum through a model of standards-based curriculum, cafeteria connections, and food access. Students are now excited about growing, preparing, and enjoying fresh, local foods, which aligns with the goal of improving health outcomes of children and families. Our school garden committee has partnered with the *Washington Youth Garden* to engage students virtually with grow-at-home kits for our 200+ students to grow their own herbs and vegetables. In 2020, we held our first Farmer's Market, where we were able to sell some of our carrots, onions, and herbs to our community.

During physical education class, second grade students learn how to ride a bike through a DCPS-wide program where the *District Department of Transportation* has provided bicycles and helmets for students. This engagement provides an opportunity for students to learn hand signals and road safety rules, and celebrate their learning by riding bicycles to a park for half a day. Additionally, all Whittier Elementary School students receive 340 minutes of exercise/movement per week between their physical education class and recess, where over 50 percent of that time is spent outdoors.

As a Title 1 school, free breakfast and lunch are provided for every student in the school. Every morning, we kick off classes with *Morning Meeting*, which is used as a fun way to welcome our students. We address our students individually, check in with how they're doing, and give them a softer way to start off the school day rather than jumping straight into academics. Sometimes this will include playing games and allowing the students to ask questions to express their curiosity or sometimes it's simply singing a fun song and moving our bodies. Our students' needs often drive the themes and topics of *Morning Meeting*. For example, in one fifth grade classroom we spent *Morning Meeting* answering

questions about COVID-19 and the Pfizer vaccine since some students expressed concern about a vaccination clinic for children ages 5-11 that Whittier was hosting. We did our best to welcome the students' questions and put their concerns at ease. Another feature of *Morning Meeting* is that we hope to soon add journaling, which will allow students the opportunity to reflect on their feelings and experiences in a way that they may not be used to, while also to practice their writing skills.

To support our students' social-emotional needs, we have a Behavioral Health Team that meets weekly to discuss the needs of our students. Our team includes our school social worker, school counselor, restorative practices coordinator, and our attendance counselor, who help us become aware of students whom we haven't seen to check in with them and their families. We assist students in meeting behavioral expectations by reinforcing social skills such as: accepting decisions of authority, following directives, and conflict resolution skills. These school wide expectations are monitored through our Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program. Through our PBIS program, students and families are connected through *ClassDojo* to ensure an easy and effective way to reward students for exhibiting positive behavior that is responsible, engaging, and accepting. The students who earn the most points are rewarded weekly by our restorative practices coordinator. These include field trips, special events, an opportunity to shop using earned points at the school store and/or extra recess. We also have a mental health therapist through a grant from the *Department of Behavioral Health* who has accepted students as clients for individual and group therapy. Our school social worker and counselor also provide therapy for students and both she and the school counselor and support for any student who wishes to speak to them regarding any mental health concerns they may be experiencing (suicidal ideation, other crises, concerns at home, conflict with friends, anxiety in the classroom, feeling overwhelmed, etc.).

At Whittier Elementary School, we are big proponents of regularly practicing deep breathing strategies with students, as well as discussing ways to use those skills inside and outside of the school. As we notice trends in the school, we aim to be responsive by addressing those needs with projects and programs. For example, after observing repeated interpersonal conflict amongst the fifth-grade girls, the team took the initiative to create a fifth-grade girls' group to help foster a greater sense of community. Additionally, after recognizing that some of our students who are struggling academically and thinking about their futures, the team took the initiative to create vision boards during lunch and recess. This activity provided students who aren't always recognized for positive reasons, the opportunity to spend time thinking about all the great things that are in store for them in the future. Student projects/work was showcased on the bulletin board outside of our counselor's office. We recognize that for many students who are often behind academically, they're rarely recognized in a positive way, and we have been delighted to see the joy on our students' faces when they see their work posted on a bulletin board underneath the big words "I will do GREAT things!"

### **Staff Health and Wellness**

Staff wellness is important at Whittier Elementary School, and it starts from the top. Our principal provides daily wellness tips; our staff lounge has been updated to include staff favorite snacks; an open-door policy for staff, students, and families by administration; and well-planned monthly staff engagements that build comradery amongst our Whittier family by our Sunshine Committee.

### **Green Cleaning**

The building services team at Whittier Elementary School is trained in green cleaning procedures as well as deep cleaning protocols using EPA approved cleaning supplies that follow CDC guidance. Whittier Elementary School engages in these sustainable cleaning practices through *EcoLogo* and *Green Seal* certified products, which are recognized worldwide and guarantee the product has been manufactured in a sustainable way with minimal impact on the environment throughout its entire life cycle. Additionally, DCPS Central Office has an established standardized inventory monitoring protocol to ensure the replenishment of supplies. Our staff consists of three custodians and one foreman that arrives every morning before 6:00 AM for a walk-through inspection of all classrooms and offices before school opens. Building

services staff dispose of trash, recycling, and compost after each meal cycle; clean food service areas several times per day; and deep clean classrooms and offices. Our building services team is an active participant in weekly staff meetings and works in conjunction with the STEM coordinator to address recycling and trash needs throughout the building. In addition to regular cleaning, custodians are on call to respond to any building moisture problems and are trained to call *Department of General Services Office of Environmental Health & Safety* should the repairs be beyond their expertise. As COVID-19 has taken over our society, teachers and students are provided with masks and sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes are used throughout the building to wipe down and clean spaces daily to prevent microbial growth.

### **Indoor Air Quality**

Per DCPS-wide directive, all classrooms, publicly shared administrative spaces, and large spaces such as gyms, cafeterias, and libraries received HEPA Filter units to promote indoor air quality and mitigate the spread of Covid-19 in 2020. Similarly, HVAC filters were upgraded to MERV-13 and 14 filters when possible and are replaced regularly. Lastly, the school was enrolled in an indoor air quality program that now tracks key indoor air quality metrics such as CO<sub>2</sub> levels. Our HVAC systems are equipped with hospital grade air filters with a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) of 14, designed to capture more than 90 percent of large particles and 70-90 percent of smaller particles. In 2020, all classrooms were provided with portable medical grade HEPA filters designed to filter 99.99 percent of particles with a diameter of 0.3 microns were added to improve indoor air quality. Indoor air quality (IAQ) sensors monitor located in each classroom and hallways to identify levels of particulates, CO<sub>2</sub>, VOC's, ozone, formaldehyde, temperature, and humidity.

### **Integrated Pest Management**

Whittier Elementary School does not use chemical pesticides, but rather uses glue-based sticky traps that are replaced every two weeks. Working more on the preventive side, we limit eating in classrooms, wipe down all tables after use, vacuum floors daily, mopping floors, and reduce opportunities for rodents by breaking down and recycling boxes. Additionally, our Garden Club and Beautification Team look to limit pests in our outdoor spaces, by collecting trash daily, clean-ups, and beautification days.

### **Family and Community Involvement**

At Whittier Elementary School, we aim to develop scholars to be sustainable members of their communities through the following efforts: recycling and reusing; growing their own food; being resourceful and creative; acting community-oriented, by thinking of ideas that will affect their communities; and living healthy lifestyles (mindful of exercise, eat, and sleep). We hope that by focusing on service learning and addressing our identified goals that our students will be well-verses in philanthropy, compassion, and empathy. Students and classes participate in various types of service projects (direct - weekly or monthly; indirect - collections/donations; advocacy - community meeting; informational night; or research - research and share information) that all address the needs of our community and align with the UN Sustainability goals.

Whittier Elementary School is a community school, and we embrace one another as family. The Garden Club collaborates with the school community to ensure planting, beautification, and maintenance of the school garden, and outdoor spaces. Through their weekly meetings with *FARMFRESH FoodPrints*, the committee provides support/instruction as to how to protect and conserve the natural resources within the scope of the school grounds.

Whittier Elementary School provides support to families with referrals for mental health services, housing, food, domestic violence resources, clothing, and legal support which can be found on our Family Resources page on our school website. Some examples of support provided this year include the *DC Food Project*, Whittier's Annual Holiday Toy Drive, and our winter coat drive. To support our families struggling with food insecurity, we have partnered with *the DC Food Project*, a local nonprofit that gathers donated food through partnerships with various other nonprofits and businesses

in the district to give out at schools and pass out bags weekly to families. This also helps us reduce food waste. Recently, we launched a food pantry through our partners at *DC Food Project* as well, which has enabled us to keep a large pantry cabinet just inside the front entrance of the school for families to grab non-perishable items that they can use at home. Many of our teachers, staff, and families have also donated additional items to that pantry to help keep the shelves fully stocked. Each holiday season, we host a huge Winter Wonderland event where all 300+ students participate in activities throughout the school day and go home with two gifts each based on donations from our own Whittier community.

Whittier Elementary School has also participated in the *Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)*'s annual *Growing Healthy Schools Month* for the past three years and has been recognized for our efforts. In 2021, Whittier was recognized by OSSE's *Capital LEAF (Leaders in Environmental Actions for our Future)* program for healthy, green, sustainable schools. Capital LEAF encourages the development of healthy school environments and helps schools to document their progress to increase sustainability and environmental education efforts and empower youth to take actions that will reduce environmental impact and improve the health and wellness of their school and community. Currently, Whittier Elementary School is scheduled for modernization in 2024 and our community welcomes input for eco-friendly, energy-efficient, and sustainable practices for our new school design.

## **Pillar 3: Efforts to Ensure Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education**

### **STEM Education focused on Urban Sustainability**

To support Whittier Elementary School's Urban Sustainability goals, we have placed and emphasis on our environmental education efforts and built relationships with community partners. Each year we host a Sustainability STEM Fair where our pre-K through Grade 5 students engage with our community partners in their classrooms, experiences are shared, questions are asked and answered, and project-based learning occurs showing the impact of their work on the environment. Whittier Elementary School offers a robust science education programming through *STEMScopes* (Grades K-5) in which all students have a weekly STEM course where they engage in the modules through the *Project Lead The Way: Launch* curriculum. In April, we host our annual Science Fair and winners move onto the district-wide Science Fair. As our school focus is Urban Sustainability, all student projects are aligned to solve environmental issues that we face in our everyday lives.

All students in pre-K through Grade 5 are enrolled in a STEM class led by our STEM coordinator, which utilizes the *Project Lead the Way: Launch* curriculum (Healthy Habits, Structure & Function: Human Body, Designs Inspired by Nature, Materials Science: Form & Function, Environmental Changes, Earth: Human Impact & Natural Disasters, Infection: Modeling & Simulation). In addition, all general education teachers integrate the STEM focus across their instructional disciplines in which students present their projects, findings, etc. at our quarterly STEM Showcase. For example, as our students learn about food insecurity, our teachers collaboratively plan to integrate STEM into all content areas (math – estimate those infected; social studies – compare Washington, DC to third-world countries; English/language arts – read/comprehend informational text).

### **Staff Professional Development**

Whittier Elementary School staff is immersed in ongoing professional throughout the school year aligned to our Urban Sustainability STEM initiatives. All staff members received training on the three Rs (reduce, reuse, and recycle) and engage in professional development aligned to utilizing our outdoor classroom spaces. Whittier Elementary School is a professional development community and everyone in our building, from our principal to building services workers, participate in training throughout the academic school year and during the summer. Some professional development that our staff has engaged in range are University of the District of Columbia Sustainable Gardening Professional Development; Out Teach; Summer Institute for Garden-Based Teaching; Project-Based Learning; OSSE's Environmental

Literacy Leadership Cadre; Project Lead the Way certification; and the National Chemistry Society's You Be the Chemist trainings. For example, Whittier's partnership with *Out Teach* has six teachers each year receive professional development on how to utilize our outdoor spaces for experiential learning for our pre-K through Grade 5 students (2018-Present). Our outdoor classrooms provide countless ways to connect math, science, social studies, and English/language arts to the real world, while adding relevance, purpose, and meaning to daily instruction. Through our partnership with the *Washington Youth Garden*, our teachers receive monthly professional development from Master Gardeners who provide instruction as to how we can increase our effectiveness around agriculture. Combined, these opportunities allow staff members to understand how we as a school can preserve, conserve, receive funding, and utilize our natural resources as a community.

### **Meaningful Learning Experiences**

Meaningful learning experiences are integrated to address local environmental issues where students are provided multiple opportunities to engage in STEM learning. Currently, each classroom (pre-K to Grade 5) is equipped with a planter to allow classrooms to grow their own herbs so that students begin to understand the development of plants firsthand as they transform from seeds to plant/crop. All students at Whittier Elementary School engage in STEM coursework through DCPS's adopted science curriculum, *STEMScopes*, where instruction is received during their science block; attend a weekly STEM class led by our STEM coordinator; and participate in outdoor learning, project-based learning, and after-school STEM learning. Students are provided field trips to explore careers in STEM and learn various ways to make their community a better place to live. Students participate in quarterly STEM projects/showcases where they investigate environmental issues and create solutions for their community. On top of the *Project Lead the Way: Launch* projects completed at the end of the module; our classes engage with other STEM partners throughout the school year.

Below are examples of community partners, *STEMScopes* topics, and *Project Lead The Way: Launch* activities/lessons that we use to address sustainability with our pre-K to Grade 5 students. For example:

#### **Early Childhood (pre-K)**

- Garbology unit of study, where students learn how to investigate decomposition, worms, and compost. Early Childhood teachers manage the school worm bin (with *Audubon Naturalist Society*).
- *The World Around Us* – students learn how we can use our five senses to learn about the environment.

#### **Kindergarten-Third Grade**

- Students engage in experiential Math and Science learning in outdoor garden space (with *Out Teach*).
- *Living Things (K)* – students learn what do plants and animals need to survive.
- *Patterns and Growth (1<sup>st</sup>)* – students learn how natural patterns affect living things? How do plants and animals change over the course of their lives?
- *Changing Landscape (2<sup>nd</sup>)* - students learn plants and animals support each other in our community. What forces change our local landscape?
- *Environmental Changes and Adaptations (3<sup>rd</sup>)* – students learn how local and living changes in the climate affect the environment.

#### **Fourth Grade**

- Students engage in computer science demonstrations. Students are provided opportunities to program robots by solving mathematics problems using Sphero robots (with *DCPS Office of Computer Science*).
- Students learn about the impact of litter on our environment and what we can do to stop pollution in our communities (with *Anacostia Watershed Society*).

## Fifth Grade

- *You Be the Chemist* - students engage in project-based learning activities, with sustained scientific inquiries.
- Students explore the fundamental principles of energy use and conservation (with *PEPCO/Exelon Foundation*).

## Pre-K through Fifth Grade

- *Project Lead The Way: Launch* engages students in project-based learning. Students learn how to become critical thinkers, solve challenges with respect to the inquiry process.
  - Pre-K - Healthy Habits
  - K - Structure & Function: Human Body
  - 1<sup>st</sup> - Designs Inspired by Nature
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> - Materials Science: Form & Function
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> - Environmental Changes
  - 4<sup>th</sup> - Earth: Human Impact & Natural Disasters
  - 5<sup>th</sup> - Infection: Modeling & Simulations
- The DCPS Recycles program allows the school to reduce waste of natural resources, and sort waste properly. Students learn how to compost and recycle (with *Department of General Services*).

Some of our student audits, information, and pictures of student action projects for our Project Lead The Way: Launch program can be found here:

- <https://www.whittierdc.org/stematwhittier>
- <https://krlstem.weebly.com>

In 2019, our STEM Committee organized a monthly STEM Talk series to connect and highlight leaders in the field of sustainability to share their experiences, strategies, and participate in a Q&A with our community. In February 2021, Whittier Elementary School held our first Sustainability STEM Fair virtually with sustainability partners and organizations from throughout the city who engaged our students in two separate hour-long sessions with hands-on demonstrations and explorations. We are the only school (elementary, middle, or high school) in Washington, DC, and its surrounding area to host a fair of this nature and bring light to how we can love our environment. Additionally, we hosted our first Virtual Science Fair where over 200 students from pre-K 3 through Grade 5 completed science projects that aligned with our urban sustainability.