



MAURY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT



District of Columbia
Office of the State
Superintendent of Education

2016 HIGHLIGHTS

- For the second year, all grade 3 students took part in the DC Beekeepers Junior Beekeeping Program, an eight-week unit on bees, the environment, pollination, and plant life.
- In partnership with the Anacostia Watershed Society, students in grades 1 and 3 had in-class lessons on their watershed and ways to protect it through the Rice Rangers and Junior Rice Rangers program. Grade 1 students learned about various native plants and took a pontoon boat trip on the Anacostia River. Grade 3 students grew native rice plants in their classroom and then planted them in the local wetlands.
- Maury Elementary students are stewards of lunchroom waste. All grade levels K-5 fully understand and implement recycling, composting, and trash at the end of the lunch period. Students help facilitate this process. In addition, Maury partners with the Department of General Services to provide and implement a waste reduction plan at the Maury STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) Expo each year.



“Our school had many pieces that were exceptional when it came to environmental education. However, we had never tracked what this looked like at each grade level. Creating an Environmental Literacy Plan for our school allowed us to step back and truly look what we were doing well, where we had gaps and what we could do to ensure that all grade levels had meaningful environmental program. It was also helpful to work with teachers at other schools who were going through the same process. We learned from one another to provide the best programs for our students and ultimately make our schools great places for environmental education.”

— Vanessa Ford, Think Tank facilitator/STEM coordinator, Maury Elementary School

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Maury Elementary School is a small, community-based school that offers students a personalized learning environment. Through work and in play, students discover their potential, embracing diversity and benefiting from strong relationships with staff, parents and volunteers. Maury is committed to providing inquiry-based learning experiences, arts enrichment and academic programs that enhance students' growth and development, inspiring a passion for learning and self-empowerment and promoting high achievement.



ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

Maury Elementary School students focus on environmental literacy in a variety of ways. Early childhood classes study flowers, water and buildings, always asking great questions and exploring the natural world to find answer. Kindergarten through grade 5 students partner with local organizations. Kindergarten and grade 2 students work with the Washington Youth Garden, grades 1 and 3 students with the Anacostia Watershed Society, and grade 4 students with Living Classrooms. Field experience for Maury students culminates in grade 5 with a three-day, two-night trip to Camp Frasier. In addition to partnerships, students focus on solving real-world environmental programs in the school's STEM program, Think Tank. From learning about and creating solar ovens to designing ways to clean up oil spills, students at Maury strengthen their problem solving skills through knowledge of the environment.

NEXT STEPS

Maury Elementary is always looking for ways to enrich its environmental program. In the coming year, the school plans to utilize the environmental literacy plan to identify gaps in learning and find ways to teach more content through the lens of the environment. Suggested programming includes restarting a Green Team to focus on the outdoor classroom, utilizing grow lights and the Tower Garden to grow throughout the year, and providing teachers and custodial team with training around the importance of proper recycling.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The Green Team should consist of multiple teachers. While it is important to have a lead adult in charge of creating and scheduling student work, having multiple adults trained, invested, and involved will help ensure that any program is fully implemented.
- Gardens are an amazing tool for learning, but they do take a lot of planning and upkeep. Have a team of teachers, students, staff, parents and/or community members take part in the planning, planting and maintaining gardens. Look for support from local organizations.
- Partner with experts. Washington, DC, has a wealth of experts in various areas in the field of environmental literacy. Reach out to them and see what programs they have for students. From assemblies to field experiences, some of our richest resources are in partner organizations.

