



WATKINS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT



District of Columbia
Office of the State
Superintendent of Education

2016 HIGHLIGHTS

- All grade levels continued to participate in the FoodPrints program. Students planted and harvested vegetables from our school garden. They used these fruits, vegetables, and herbs to prepare and enjoy nutritious meals. They also studied grade-level appropriate plant science and environmental science topics.
- Students in grade 2 completed a thorough study of pollinators with lessons overlapping with the classroom and FoodPrints lessons.
- Teachers of grades 3-5 previewed the environmental education content of the science assessment to help them focus on environmental education as they prepare their students for the new high-stakes test.
- Grade 1 students went on their first trip to Port Discovery.
- The Capitol Hill Cluster School Parent Teacher Association (CHCS PTA) has committed to make specific allocations for buses for field trips for all grade levels next year.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Watkins Elementary is located near the corner of 12th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue SE, in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. The building is surrounded by school gardens, tended by volunteers under the guidance of a master gardener. Watkins is a grades 1-5 school that is part of the Capitol Hill Cluster, which also includes Peabody Early Childhood Campus and Stuart-Hobson Middle School. Approximately 500 students attend Watkins. Students have been lucky to participate in the FoodPrints program since it was started in 2009. Watkins has a beautiful teaching kitchen, which will be preserved as the school undergoes renovation during the 2016-17 school year. The CHCS PTA supports school programs through its many fundraising efforts including the Capitol Hill Classic.



“It is so rewarding to see students expressing excitement and curiosity as they interact with the world around them. It inspires hope to know that students are developing more of a connection to the world around them and are developing a sense of stewardship, starting with their local schoolyard and extending out into our city and watershed.”

– Sashaum Deprez, grade 2 math and science teacher, Watkins Elementary School





ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

Students at Watkins experience the greatest cohesion in their environmental education through their participation in the FoodPrints program. Through this program, students progress through a series of lessons centered around nutrition and gardening. In grade 1, the focus is on learning about plant parts. Grade 2 progresses to learning more about plant parts with the addition of pollinators and an introduction to photosynthesis. In grade 3, the focus shifts to how food choices affect nutrition, while students in grade 4 dive deeper into plant science and return to the concept of photosynthesis along with studying decomposition and composting. Grade 5 students study the origins of different foods and also incorporate more math into their cooking and gardening. In addition to the series of lessons in FoodPrints, grades 1-2 students study differences between plants and animals in their classrooms and through field experiences such as trips to the zoo and the US Botanic Gardens. Grades 3-5 students spend one day out of the week in the science lab and also participate in activities such as raising and releasing ladybug larvae, Debris Day at Kingman Island, and science fair.



NEXT STEPS

Next year, Watkins teachers plan to tap into some of the experiences and resources that were offered this year, but were not able to utilize. Grade 4 teachers will raise and release shad and go on the Anacostia River trip, and grade 5 students will hopefully go on an overnight Meaningful Watershed Experience. Grades 1-2 students will have additional science experiences through Project Lead the Way. Fortunately, although the school will be in a swing space next year at Eliot-Hine Middle School, Watkins students will be able to continue with the FoodPrints program on a more limited scale. When students return to the Watkins building in the 2017-18 school year, the plan is to get the recycling program off to a strong start.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Try to have at least two people on an environmental literacy team.
- Engage the Environmental Literacy Fellow to assist with scheduling field trips.
- Participate in monthly Environmental Literacy Leadership Cadre meetings to keep focused and energized and to learn about additional environmental education opportunities.