



ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

2019-20 HIGHLIGHTS

- Formally launched a school-wide environmental science program to support all grade levels, pre-K through grade 5. All students participated in project-based learning initiatives and instruction aligned with environmental literacy standards through partnerships with Casey Trees and the Audubon Naturalist Society that will prepare students to understand, analyze, and address real-world environmental challenges facing communities and the nation.
- Recommended the need to implement daily science instruction to support all grade-levels that will be rolled-out for 2020-21 school year!
- Developed and implemented project-based learning centers that empower students to learn about healthy lifestyles through nutrition and outdoor recreation to support greener living inside and outside the school building.
- In December 2019, students became pro-environmental activists and citizens! Upper grade-level students learned in real-time about the importance of climate change activism by studying international climate strikes and what it means to engage in climate change protests and events that were currently taking place in our Nation’s Capital. Students watched short-docu-series and videos, read books, and studied social media messaging to get a real sense of today’s environmental issues and concerns. Students coordinated and participated in a mock climate strike to support the international climate strike across the globe. The multidisciplinary project included writing speeches, creating posters, and drafting social media messaging to support the event.



ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Amidon-Bowen Elementary, located in the historic Southwest neighborhood, was created when two schools merged in 2009, Amidon Elementary and Anthony Bowen Elementary. Amidon-Bowen is an expanding community-based school that has strong family engagement partnerships through the Parent Teacher Organization, VIBE Parents Collective, and the Flamboyant Foundation. The school serves approximately 350 students in pre-K 3 through grade 5, and supports two inclusive classrooms. Amidon-Bowen’s mission is embedded in the school’s founding principles that highlight scholarship and excellence in academics and the arts grounded in values of heart-mind-voice, which are infused into every learning experience in the school. Individually and collectively, teachers are committed to developing students’ intellectual inquiry, global citizenship, and environmental stewardship. Amidon-Bowen celebrates values of diversity, equity, and social-emotional learning and is fortunate to have a very involved PTO and guardian community that is always eager and ready to support core curriculum initiatives and projects.

“The environmental literacy program has sparked an interest in Amidon-Bowen students to be environmental citizens! While we learned some amazing things this year, what stood out the most for me was how students linked the 2019 United Nations Climate Summit to environmental science issues affecting their community. Students learned the importance of activism through Greta Thunberg and were excited to create a movement within their classrooms. They learned and understood they too can make a difference and share in the responsibility to make a huge impact.”

– S. Logan, Library Media Specialist, Amidon-Bowen Elementary School

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

Amidon-Bowen's environmental literacy program is in its infancy stage. As teachers collaborate to increase science education school-wide, students will gain the necessary knowledge about all areas of environmental literacy by the time they leave to attend middle school. At the primary level, lesson plans will include sensory gardening experiences, "food to taste" mini-lessons, and read-aloud activities. For lower and upper elementary students, science instruction will include ecosystem lessons. All students will also participate in field trips, whether through in-person visits or virtual distance learning experiences. The school will be working toward implementation of a school-wide recycling program, to include composting components. To do this work effectively, Amidon-Bowen relies on environmental partners and funding to support required resources, materials, and field experiences. If students engage in environmental literacy activities beginning in pre-K and build upon that knowledge at each advancing grade, students will know the importance of being good stewards to our environment.



NEXT STEPS

Next year, all students will receive 45 minutes of daily science instruction. Specific grade-level projects and field trips that started this year will continue next year for each new grade level of students. The goal is to integrate environmental literacy into the required science program to augment student field experiences, project-based learning projects, grants, and community partners. Additionally, Amidon-Bowen will have a new playground space that emphasizes green space and new playground equipment that will be used as a gathering place for students and families outside of school hours. The expanded space will support the school garden and instruction inside and outdoors. Amidon-Bowen will continue to focus on implementing a school-wide recycling program in partnership with the Department of General Services, and will involve teachers and parent volunteers in the planning and coordination process. The goal is to have recycling bins in every classroom, including large recycling bins to support each floor for easy access, and signage posted on recycling receptacles to support students and school staff.

LESSON LEARNED

- Prior to launching the program, garner the support of a dedicated team, to include fellow teachers, the custodial staff, and principal. Without a team, the mission struggles to materialize and engage students school-wide.
- Create a quarterly newsletter for teachers and families. By highlighting student achievement, "ah-ha" moments, planning events, and program timelines, the newsletter will help keep the program momentum high while acknowledging people behind the scenes helping to reach the program's over-arching goals.
- Provide field experiences aligned to current events and the academic curriculum to create innovative learning experiences. Environmental literacy is an essential part of a well-rounded education and can be integrated across all subjects. The greater Washington, DC area offers an abundance of organizations and resources to support student learning and systems-thinking, including zoos, parks, forests, gardens, museums and nature centers. The combination of these formal and informal experiences lead students to be environmentally literate citizens.
- Be patient. Little wins add up and make a huge difference.
- Listen to the students and be sure to highlight their voices in all projects!