

## ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

### 2017-19 HIGHLIGHTS

- All students in preschool through grade 5 participated in environmental field trips on or off campus. They deepened their understanding of environmental concepts at an age-appropriate level that blends well with their academic content.
- Teachers led classroom lessons outside, taking advantage of the vast green space on campus.
- Staff went through a recycling training that covered information about what can be recycled, how to explain recycling to students, how to access recycling bins, and how to involve families in the process at home.



### ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Creative Minds International Public Charter School is located Ward 5 and serves more than 400 students. It is the only public school in the District of Columbia that has received the accreditation by Fieldwork Education to offer the International Primary Curriculum. The program's unique combination of child-centered, arts-based, international, and developmental approaches to education is based on extensive research into various aspects of schooling that have the greatest positive effects on academic achievement. The environmental literacy work infuses seamlessly with the mission and culture of the school. Students and teachers alike value learning about and taking care of the planet.

“ I loved the connection we were able to make between the learning we were already doing in the classroom and the real-world, hands-on application at the arboretum. We were able to see a large-scale functioning garden, compost on a large scale, and taste the fresh vegetables. This was the first time that many of these students were able to make the connection between the food we eat and where it comes from. What a magical experience.”

– Alicia Ronquillo, grade 1 teacher, Creative Minds International PCS



## ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

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The main goal at Creative Minds International PCS is to ensure that the recycling process was being executed with fidelity from start to finish. The school gave the custodial staff proper training on how to sort and collect recycling and waste. Additionally, the school provided all classrooms and offices recycling bins. Students in preschool and pre-K participate in Salad Science lessons with the Audubon Naturalist Society. Kindergarten and first grade students go on a field trip to the Washington Youth Garden where they learned about plants. Second grade students learn about garbology, the science of garbage. Third grade students access EcoRise environmental lessons and had access to writing and receiving grants for environmental projects to be executed on campus. Fourth grade students go to the Anacostia River with the Anacostia Watershed Society. Finally, fifth graders work with Casey Trees and Clean Air Partners to do an inquiry study of local trees and air quality. Overall, Creative Minds International PCS has grown tremendously in its environmental practices and awareness through the environmental literacy program.



## LESSONS LEARNED

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- Even though everyone is supportive of the cause, recognize that change is slow and hard. Small victories can add up to big change.
- Create calendar reminders to follow up with people. Ideas and tasks often get lost among all of the other things that need to be done in a school.
- Try to create a support team to share the work rather than taking it all on.

## NEXT STEPS

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Moving forward, there is a lot of work to be done. The school needs to ensure that all recently on-boarded staff can be trained in recycling. Creative Minds International PCS also needs to confirm that a recycling bin is in each room and are accessible. Furthermore, the school needs confirmation that all teachers have taught recycling to their students and have created a culture shift around recycling. In the future, it is suggested that the administration work on creating a compost program as well as food conservation for what is not eaten.