



## ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

### 2022-23 HIGHLIGHTS

- Awarded a *KidsGardening* youth grant to make repairs to the greenhouse, garden beds, and provide additional tools for the students to use.
- Partnered with the Friends of the National Arboretum's Washington Youth Garden and the Anacostia Watershed Society to provide students with learning adventures within and close to the District of Columbia.
- Maintained a garden during the fall and the spring to enrich lessons, practice gardening skills, and provide vegetables for food demonstrations.
- Started a composting program with students in grades 1-4 to improve the soil of the school garden and reduce the school's waste stream.

### ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Mary McLeod Bethune Day Academy Public Charter School (MMBDA) is an International Baccalaureate (IB) school that serves students from pre-K through grade 8. As an IB school, students are encouraged to have a global perspective and become independent learners to explore their own passions. The goal of the school is to provide students with learning experiences that lead to academic development, talent development, and everlasting love for learning. MMBDA has a dual language program running from pre-K through grade 5. The school also offers a wide variety of special courses including Latin, music, art, African American studies, and environmental science to ensure each student receives a well-rounded education.



“The ultimate goal of our environmental science program is to develop individual actions that will enable each of our community members to recognize their role in creating a sustainable, healthy environment and how each member has the obligation to react, respond, and take action to reduce global warming, positively affect climate change, ensure good air quality, and enable the continuity of a healthy food chain for this and future generations.”

– Dr. Linda McKay, Founder and Executive Director, Mary McLeod Bethune Day Academy Public Charter School

## ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

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The Environmental Literacy Program is mainly implemented through the environmental science course at MMBDA. During the 2022-23 school year, all students took this class for one semester, and some students took the class for the whole year. The course is aligned with both the IB framework and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) to ensure a rigorous academic curriculum that is aligned with the rest of the school. Depending on the grade level, students explore a variety of environmental topics such as water pollution, climate change, plant life cycles, compost, pollination, and more. The classroom is adjacent to the school garden and allows hands-on experiences to support what students learn in class. In addition, the garden provides nutritious vegetables used for food demonstrations throughout the school year. Outside of the environmental science classroom, the Environmental Literacy Program also includes a partnership with the Friends of the National Arboretum, whose Washington Youth Garden staff co-taught units with other classes at MMBDA on environmental topics. Together, these programs provide students with the knowledge to explore the environment around them and become environmental stewards for the planet.



### NEXT STEPS

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MMBDA will continue to grow the Environmental Literacy Program by using the IB framework to ensure that the environmental science course is well integrated into the school. This will allow for environmental education to be more widely supported and taught throughout the school and allow students to make connections through multiple disciplines. The school will also maintain relationships with community partners to give the students meaningful outdoor experiences.

In addition to the existing garden and greenhouse, the school has plans to build a new greenhouse to expand the gardening program. The Environmental Literacy Program will also work to expand and institutionalize the composting program to practice sustainability at the school in partnership with a larger garden club and by working with the school staff.

### LESSONS LEARNED

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- You can never start planning too early. The school year always flies by and before long you are already talking about next school year.
- Partner with organizations in the District of Columbia. There are some amazing resources out there that can improve your program.
- Make the program as student-led as possible. If the students are invested, then it is more likely to succeed and make an impact.

