

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

As a school that understands the importance of STEM, Hendley provides ample opportunities for all grades to engage in environmental literacy. The school has a dedicated STEM teacher who coordinates with grade level teachers and provides hands-on engaging lessons for pre-K through fifth grade. Classroom teachers have organized engaging lessons in the school garden. Additionally, Hendley has started to recycle and compost. Under the watchful eye of Recycling Team Captains, all students collaborate to ensure the recycling bins are emptied and properly used during breakfast time. Pre-K students have created an environmentally-conscious culture by composting each meal – breakfast and lunch. To wrap up the kindergarten English/Language Arts unit on conservation, the students engaged in a Cornerstone project in the garden. Each class planted their own tree. The unit was supported by books about the environment such as *The Lorax*. The school also partners with the Friends of the National Arboretum's Washington Youth Garden program, which provided second grade classes with field trips in the garden at the US National Arboretum and support with school garden maintenance. In addition, Hendley leverages the FoodCorps curriculum to provide engaging lessons in healthy foods, gardening, and pollination.



NEXT STEPS

To successfully continue recycling during the next school year, Hendley needs a consistent recycling pick-up schedule from the Department of General Services. Once a consistent recycling system is in place, the school would like to expand its composting program to include lunch from all grades. Garden maintenance work will expand to include a pollinator garden and additional herbs in the herb garden. To reinvigorate the pollinator garden, students will plant seeds provided by the Department of Energy and Environment and teachers will use resources from Anacostia Watershed Society to educate students on the most effective additions to the garden. Once the RiverSmart Schools outdoor space is complete, the school will create a schedule for access to these outdoor spaces, so all classes have equitable time outside.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Consistency is key. Having a schedule for staff members and students to pick up recycling or tend to the garden is helpful in making sure all tasks are completed.
- Students enjoy taking ownership of lessons and activities. Garden work should be an engaging learning experience for students, not a task for staff members.
- Have an understanding of staff or organizations that are able to carry out necessary tasks. Sometimes, components of a project or activity will not be carried out by others that you do not have control over.

