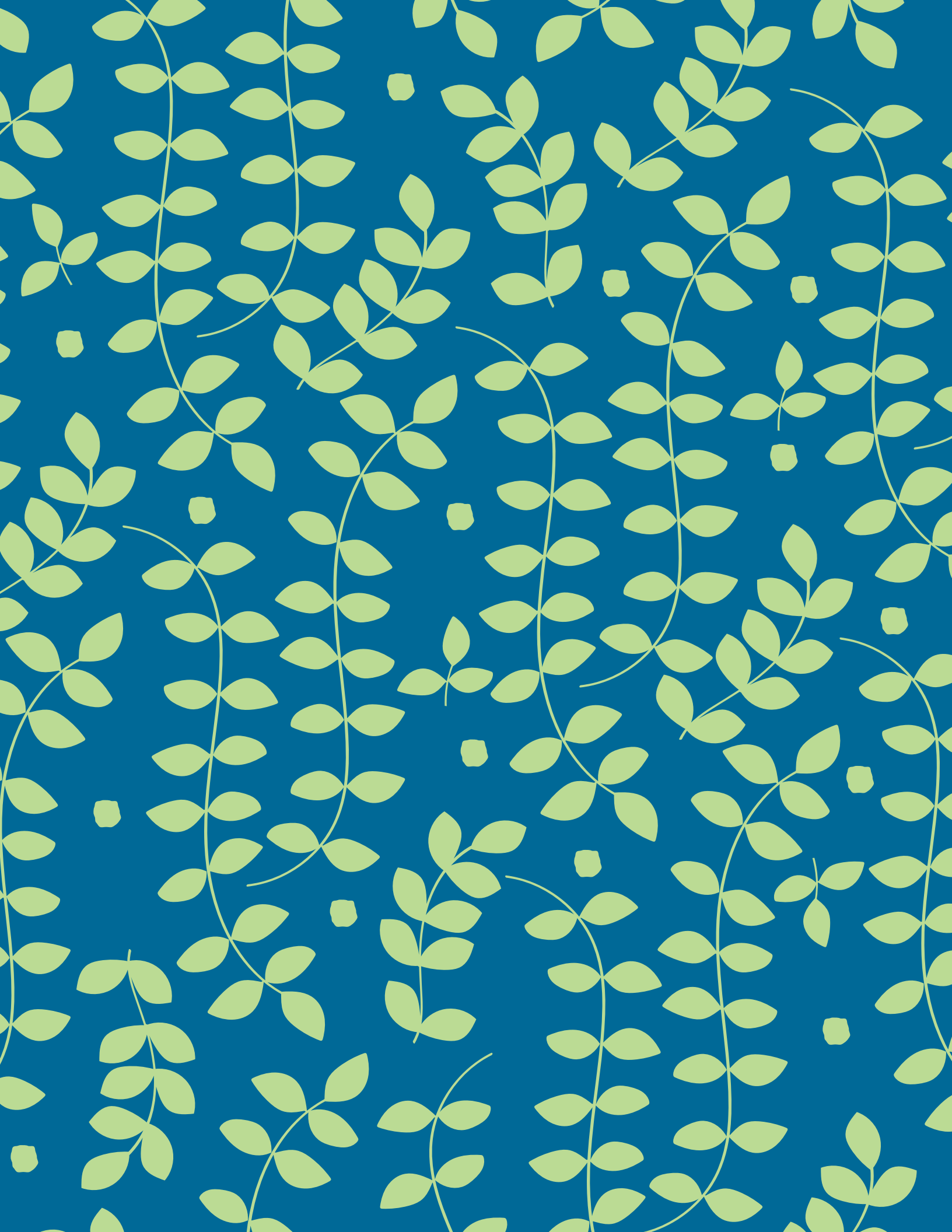




District of Columbia
Office of the State Superintendent of Education

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY LEADERSHIP CADRE SNAPSHOTS

September 2023



ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY LEADERSHIP CADRE

In January 2022, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) selected elementary teachers and educators from 12 schools across the District to participate in the fourth cohort of the Environmental Literacy Leadership Cadre program. Educators were responsible for the development and implementation of a plan to integrate environmental literacy programs at every grade level within their school. The cadre members were supported by mentors, who provided guidance, feedback, and technical assistance. The snapshots in this booklet describe the efforts of the cadre members, in addition to their future plans and lessons learned.

2022-23 ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY LEADERSHIP CADRE MEMBERS:

- Mary McLeod Bethune Day Academy Public Charter School, Ethan Wise
- Brightwood Education Campus, Ruben Schurman[^]
- Burrville Elementary, Angela Mason and Katina Phifer^{+^}
- Center City Public Charter School – Brightwood, Samantha Novak
- C.W. Harris Elementary, Tacora Snell
- Hendley Elementary, Sophia Barrata
- KIPP DC Public Charter Schools – Honor & AIM Academies, Lamario Stanley
- Langley Elementary, Jennifer Wehner
- Powell Elementary, Catherine Moessner
- Sela Public Charter School, Yoel Wachtel
- Van Ness Elementary, Jennifer Krystopowicz^{*^}
- Washington Yu Ying Public Charter School, Paula Zimmerman

* Denotes participant in first year only

+ Denotes participant in second year only

[^] School snapshot not available

MENTORS:

- Margi Fineran, FreshFarm
- Grace Manubay, OSSE
- Ariel Trahan, Anacostia Watershed Society

For questions about the Environmental Literacy Leadership Cadre, please contact Grace Manubay, environmental literacy coordinator at Grace.Manubay@dc.gov.



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 PCS (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

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, with some students taking the class for the whole year. The course is aligned with both the IB framework and the Next General Science Standards 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 our planet.



NEXT STEPS

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 our 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. This can be executed in partnership with a larger garden club and by working with the school staff.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 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.





ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

2022-23 HIGHLIGHTS

- All classes engaged in an environmental literacy activity aligned with their curriculum.
- Held our first outdoor “Brightwood Bunches” in which classes were paired to plant flowers to decorate our school garden.
- Created a network-wide task force to support environmental literacy in the upcoming school years.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Center City PCS develops the whole child by offering a wide array of arts and enrichment classes both during and after school. The Brightwood campus has built a safe, inclusive atmosphere by adopting the philosophy of restorative practices as its approach to culture and discipline. This culture allows us to hold students to the highest of academic expectations, creating a space where excellence is the norm and making mistakes is part of the educational journey. Inclusion specialists work hand-in-hand with general education teachers to differentiate instruction and provide individualized supports to students. The school also offers the ESL After the Bell program, which provides targeted academic support to English learners after school. The rich enrichment offerings engage students in learning and foster their social, emotional, and physical development. Center City PCS offers band, vocal music, a dance company, an annual school musical, and a variety of sports teams. These opportunities support the belief that students learn best when the school is focused on educating the whole child.



“I am so impressed by how my students have embraced this idea of sustainability. It has been such an adventure to see them get involved, and get passionate about our Earth. I hope that we can continue to be changemakers in schools, and then even more so in our community!”

– Samantha Novak, Middle School Science Teacher,
Center City PCS - Brightwood

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

All students, grades pre-K 3 through grade 8, have the opportunity to engage in at least one environmental field trip per year, whether exploring the watershed or visiting to a local farm. Through these experiences, students learn the importance of taking care of the planet and the impacts that humans have on the environment. Pre-K starts at a very basic level by introducing the environment, including plants and animals. As students get older, they begin to understand the small things individuals within a community can do to take care of the planet, such as reducing plastic consumption by switching to reusable water bottles and bringing bags to the grocery store. In middle school, students learn about bigger human impacts on the environment, including deforestation, burning fossil fuels, and other contributions to climate change caused by big companies and the larger human population. At the end of the year, middle school students hold an Environmental Literacy fair in which they shared what they learned with younger grade levels and families. Students teach lessons about sustainability and lead make-and-take activities with families to make and take home, such as produce bags from recycled t-shirts, cleaning products, and reusable beeswax food wraps.



NEXT STEPS

Center City PCS plans to build out its Environmental Literacy Program in the next few years. The first step is to leverage a group of teachers across the six campuses to come up with ways environmental literacy can be further embedded even more into the curriculum. The six campuses also have plans to improve outdoor learning spaces, which will include adding spaces for gardening, and other outdoor learning opportunities. Center City PCS is also working to have a more consistent recycling and composting program throughout all campuses to decrease the amount of trash produced. All schools will work to create an environmental team with students, staff, and families responsible for this work.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Start small. It is way easier to get buy-in from staff when you have a successful first project.
- By leveraging strengths from everyone – from the physical education teacher to a kindergarten class with big ideas – we have the best chance to make an impact.
- Don't be afraid to try. The only thing worse than doing something wrong, is doing nothing at all!





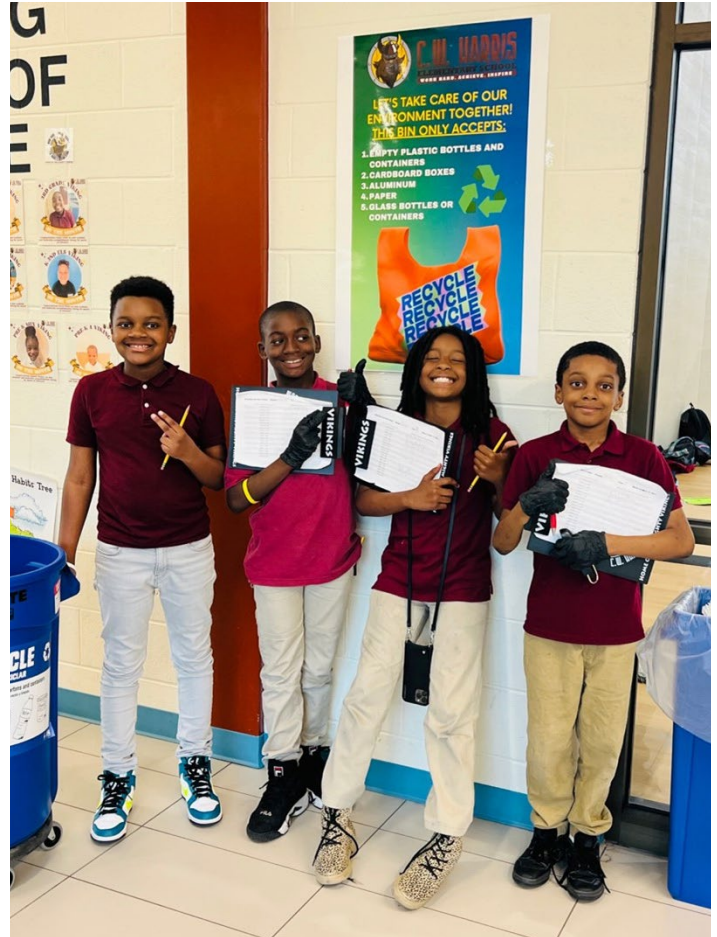
ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

2022-23 HIGHLIGHTS

- Fourth grade environmental literacy ambassadors took initiative to engage the entire Harris community in a school-wide recycling challenge and managed the whole process.
- Students in the grades 3-5, self-contained special education classes completed an energy audit for the school building and shared the results with community partners.
- New amenities were added to the school's outdoor learning spaces.
- More environmental science is being taught in grades K-5 on a consistent basis.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

C.W. Harris Elementary School is a community school located in the District of Columbia's Ward 7 and serves students and families from pre-K 3 through grade 5. C.W. Harris is part of the DC Public Schools' Rigorous Instruction Supports Equity (RISE) initiative, and the school focuses on improving and advancing the lives of students through social emotional learning, academic acceleration, and acts of service. The mission of C.W. Harris is to collaborate with our families and community partners to provide an academic experience that is rooted in developing the whole child. Through student centered learning, the school will inspire creativity, cultivate growth, and develop the diverse strengths and talents of the community.



“Environmental literacy programming challenges our school community to be more intentional about waste and human impact on the environment. Although the Harris community has a long way to go in improving its practices in caring for our planet, it is inspiring how so many young Vikings commit to working hard and inspire us all to be better stewards of our school and individual homes.”

– Tacora Snell, Instructional Coach, C.W. Harris Elementary

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

C.W. Harris Elementary students focus on environmental education in a multitude of ways, starting in the classroom through science instruction that focuses heavily on engaging students in project-based learning and real-world application of environmental concepts. Students from grades pre-K through grade 5 participate in the FRESHFARM FoodPrints program, a variety of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programming, and outdoor learning that enhances individual environmental literacy. This year, the school focused on building the capacity and commitment for recycling as well as encouraging more environmental conscious practices in the classrooms and throughout the building. As students matriculate throughout their time at Harris, they are afforded opportunities to explore and enhance their environmental literacy in the school's outdoor spaces, participate in programming provided by various community partners, and continue to grow the impact of environmental stewardship.

NEXT STEPS

In the upcoming school year, a top priority will be to inspire and engage students and families through environmentally focused project-based learning. Students will be incentivized to apply their knowledge and skills in other areas of their lives. With their families, students will have opportunities to earn awards and monetary rewards by competing in challenges that increase environmental literacy and raise consciousness about everyday human activities.

The school will continue to advance environmental literacy in the classroom by incorporating the study and analysis of careers that focus on improving human activities. Lessons will be enhanced with experiential learning related to recycling, reducing, reusing, plus gardening and planting.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Small steps make a big difference.
- It is essential to get your entire team on the same page and tap into the strengths of your community.
- Get input from as many community members as possible and appreciate feedback.





2022-23 HIGHLIGHTS

- Initiated a recycling program by working with the Department of General Services to provide recycling bins in each classroom and on the hallway floors. Students learned what does or does not go into recycling. Each grade had a “Team Captain” who helped empty class bins into the larger floor bins.
- Students took ownership of maintaining the school garden. Classes from pre-K through grade 3 prepared the beds and planted seedlings from the University of the District of Columbia’s 4-H program.
- As part of the Department of Energy and Environment’s Nature Near Schools grant program, second grade students went on a field trip with the Anacostia Watershed Society, which included a boat tour of the Anacostia River and stormwater management activities.
- Pre-K students learned about composting. During breakfast and lunch, they separated their compost from trash in their classrooms.



ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hendley Elementary is a Title I elementary school with grades pre-K 4 through grade 5. The school proudly serves the Washington Highlands neighborhood, located in Ward 8 in the District of Columbia’s Southeast quadrant. Many of the teachers have been long-standing members of the Hendley community who have taught both alumni and their children. The school has several outdoor learning areas, including our well maintained Hendley Garden. Students regularly help maintain the garden with teachers and enjoy science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) lessons outside in the rear learning space. With a RiverSmart Schools grant from the Department of Energy and Environment, Hendley will receive new outdoor learning classroom designs to further ensure high quality STEM instruction for all students. Teachers also use STEMScopes, which provides materials for hands-on experiments and aligns with the DC Public Schools science curriculum.

“This has been a great year in environmental literacy for Hendley. Our students learned how [environmental literacy] can help our community and communities around the world. Recycling and planting have helped students put their learning into action!”

- Natalie Nagorski, Kindergarten Teacher, Hendley Elementary

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 garden maintenance at our school. 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 our 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.





KIPP DC: Honor and AIM Academies

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

2022-23 HIGHLIGHTS

- Successfully launched school-wide paper recycling programs at two KIPP campuses. KIPP's leadership and operational management team organized professional development training and procurement of recycling bins.
- Participants in AIM GREEN, an environmental literacy after-school program for all interested fifth graders, learned about recycling and were responsible for collecting materials from the blue recycling bins twice per week. These students were also in charge of sharing with teachers and students the importance of recycling.
- All grade 4 students participated in a virtual field trip with the US Botanic Garden. As an incentive, students received a Makey Makey coding circuit to help enhance their coding skills.
- Fifth grade students in the AIM GREEN program visited the National Children's Museum and the US Botanic Garden.

ABOUT THE SCHOOLS

KIPP DC's Honor Academy and AIM Academy foster rigorous and supportive learning environments that prepare students for academic success in high school, college, careers, and beyond. Honor Academy enrolls students in grades 4-8 and AIM Academy enrolls students in grades 5-8. Students at both campuses are engaged in a diverse curriculum of not only English, math, history, and science classes, but also dance, theater, art, and physical education. Both campuses offer a daily, a 50-minute Next Generation Science Standards-aligned science program for all students. Teachers at both locations are committed to supporting the social-emotional development of their middle school students by developing close relationships with their students and families, ensuring a smooth transition into adolescence



“It was so wonderful seeing my students become so engaged in their community! They had so many questions about not just the recycling in their neighborhood but also the history of recycling in the District of Columbia, the impact it had on the environment and how they could be part of saving the world ecosystem.”

– Neshea Williams, KIPP DC AIM Academy,
5th Grade Level Chair

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

The Environmental Literacy Program has been a valuable and instrumental tool in engaging and educating students at Honor and AIM Academies. Students have opportunities to experience the joy that comes with learning about their local community and how they can help keep it safe and clean. Students conducted a waste audit of the lunchroom and classrooms to inform implementation of a school-wide recycling and waste reduction program. Environmental experiences also include visits to a pumpkin patch farm, the US Botanic Garden, and other local education sites. Fourth grade students have hands-on lessons holding and observing live worms to learn how vermicomposting is good for the environment. Grade 5 students learn how different insects are attracted to different types of foods and live in different ecosystems and worked in four-person teams to build bug motels out of recycled and repurposed household items, such as milk cartons and jugs, shoe boxes, and toilet paper rolls. Overall, the environmental literacy program is engineered to help our students develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to become Washington DC's next generation of environmental leaders.



NEXT STEPS

All students will continue to receive 50-60 minutes of science instruction daily. 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. Both schools will continue to focus on growing the recycling program by reaching out to the other schools within the KIPP DC network and asking them to join in the efforts.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Starting a major program at your school requires more than just you and your vision – recruit the support of your principals and administrative teams, building maintenance teams, and fellow teachers as much as possible. The visions you want to implement for your students and school community may not have lasting effects to keep the program going without a team and family approach.
- After school environmental literacy programs should consist of multiple teachers helping out. While it is important to have a lead adult in charge of creating and scheduling student work, having multiple adults trained, invested, and involved will help ensure that any program is fully implemented.
- There are plenty of resources and materials out there with little to no cost for educators and school leaders. Washington, DC is filled with organizations that have programming or curriculum for students, and some organizations will help cover the costs!



ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

2022-2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- Developed a new partnership with Nature Forward. This program supports students in grades K-5 with hands-on learning experiences with environmental focuses.
- Launched the Langley Conservation and Recycling Club. Students in pre-K through grade 5 recycle in their classrooms and hallways. Students have also started to pick up litter around the school grounds.
- Weekly opportunities to visit the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) Lab to engage in hands-on learning within units of study that follow Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the Engineering and Design Process.
- An ongoing partnership with FRESHFARM’s FoodPrints program gives the students the opportunity to plant and harvest from our garden. Students take what they harvested and will cook healthy meals. This opportunity helps students discover new and healthy ways to eat and help the environment.
- Received a RiverSmart Schools grant from the Department of Energy and Environment, which facilitates a collaboration with parents and teachers to plan and implement improvements around the school to reduce the impacts of stormwater runoff on the school and community.



“Participating in the environmental literacy program has made an impact on students and staff. We are continuing to build our STEM program and focusing on environmental issues. Students are encouraged to explore environmental issues through units of study developed by teachers and through our partnership with FRESHFARM’s FoodPrints. The environmental literacy program will continue to be an integral part of helping Langley Elementary foster caring and resilient problem-solvers.”

– Jennifer Wehner, School-wide Enrichment Model Teacher, Langley Elementary

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Langley Elementary School is the home of the Langley Tigers, where students learn to be resilient problem-solvers and thinkers through rigorous and joyful learning experiences. Located in Ward 5 in the Eckington Neighborhood, Langley is a Title I school that serves approximately 350 students with a wide range of talents and abilities in grades pre-K 3 through grade 5. Currently, the school is in the process of establishing its STEM program. Students in all grades receive weekly hands-on lab and exploration using the NGSS and the Engineering and Design Process. Learning is facilitated through a school-wide focus on data-driven instruction and hands-on exploratory projects, which enables students to experience rigorous content through collaboration with stakeholders and local partnerships. Staff believe that with an abundant amount of care and support, Langley scholars can achieve at the highest levels.

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

As Langley establishes its STEM-focused instruction, the environmental literacy program has helped enhance and implement environmental literacy standards with new partnerships. Nature Forward has engaged students in grades 2, 3, and 5 with lessons on erosion, water quality, and reduce and reuse resources. The continued participation with FoodPrints and beginning composting with Veterans Compost. Learning how to maintain and incorporate worm bins to teach environmental standards.



NEXT STEPS

- Continue to build Langley's STEM program with partnerships that support real-world connections and field trip experiences.
- Develop a STEM Framework that will extend and enhance STEM programming.
- Seek out STEM professional development that focuses on STEM best practices opportunities for new and returning staff and educational aides.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Educate all stakeholders about the impact of environmental literacy in elementary grades at the beginning and throughout the school year.
- Create a team of teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and students that are all bought into the vision to support planning and events.





Powell Bilingual Elementary School

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

2022-23 HIGHLIGHTS

- Began FRESHFARM FoodPrints partnership in 2021-2022 school year, which included the expansion and improvement of a school garden.
- All students attend FoodPrints classes monthly for 90 minutes in school year 2022-2023. Early childhood students began attending FoodPrints classes and working in the garden.
- Each grade level completes at least one unit grounded in environmental literacy, from units about trees and insects to the impact of humans on the environment.
- Students learned about the local Powell environment during school year 2021-2022 through Camp Fraser Outdoor Education experiences with Living Classrooms.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Powell Elementary is an award-winning community school in Petworth focused on academic success for all. Students demonstrate academic achievement through portfolios, performances, and assessments. Through our dual language program, students have the opportunity to become bilingual while acquiring the skills they need to succeed in a global society. The dual language program provides students at least 50 percent of their instruction in Spanish. Curriculum is designed so that instruction in Spanish builds upon instruction in English and vice versa. Students who complete our dual language program will have the foundation to be bilingual and biliterate, while also achieving academic success and cultural competency. Powell also has many community partners, including Mary's Center, AmeriCorps, DC Scores, FRESHFARM FoodPrints, and the Embassy of Spain.



“Our students love FoodPrints! It gives our students a chance to get outside and get dirty, and to know where their food comes from. They are so proud to make dishes like cornbread, chili, and pesto pasta, and to try these healthy foods. Students were recently served mushrooms with rosemary in the school cafeteria. They were able to go out to the garden and see a rosemary plant. The garden lets them see where their food is coming from.”

- Morgan Hall, Assistant Principal, Powell Elementary

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

Students at Powell Bilingual Elementary School participate in FRESHFARM FoodPrints classes monthly throughout the school year. These classes include hands-on activities as well as garden and cooking experiences. The standards- and curriculum-based lessons provide all students with opportunities to grow their own food, cook with fresh ingredients, and learn about nutrition. Powell students also have at least one unit in language arts or science class that has a focus on environmental literacy. Pre-K students explore trees and insects, while kindergarteners learn about community workers and their impact on the environment. Both first and second graders think about the effects of weather on their environment, and second graders also learn about environmental activists. In third grade, students learn about different habitats and how changes to habitats can affect the organisms that live there. Fourth graders explore the Earth's natural resources, and fifth graders investigate the impact humans have on the Earth's systems.

NEXT STEPS

Next school year, staff hope to introduce a recycling program at Powell. All classrooms have recycling bins, but trash and recycling are not sorted correctly. Because of this, most of our paper ends up in the regular trash. During the science unit on the impact of humans on Earth, the fifth graders will be enlisted to brainstorm ideas for how to recycle paper at Powell, create a plan to encourage recycling sorting in classrooms and collection, and then educate other grades on how to correctly recycle. Students could then help run this recycling program, taking ownership of this aspect of their impact on their environment.



LESSONS LEARNED

- If putting in a garden, consider where water will come from! It can be a challenge to get a water source installed and you want to be able to easily water your garden.
- Think about space for programs. When our school first started with FoodPrints, we did not have a designated space available. The FoodPrints team had to find solutions for storing materials and where they would hold their lessons when not in the garden.
- Find others to help. It can be overwhelming to try and plan and then implement something new.



ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

2022-23 HIGHLIGHTS

- Formed a working group to promote environmental awareness in our school.
- Restarted the school's garden activities. Students sprouted seeds, grew the seedlings in the winter in LED indoor bins, and then transplanting them to the outside garden.
- Built garden beds and converted the entrance lawn into a thriving sensory and herb garden.
- Engaged students in recycling activities.
- Collaborated with the Friends of the National Arboretum on teacher professional development to promote garden activities and share instructional insights into elementary school curriculum.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sela Public Charter School is the only Hebrew language immersion charter school in the Washington, DC area. Sela is a diverse, growing elementary school and has been recognized by the US Department of Education as a Blue Ribbon School. Sela's mission is founded on the following four pillars: being culturally innovative, diverse, striving for excellence, and preparing students to become global citizens.



“Sowing the seeds of life in our children, one seedling at a time.”

– Sela PCS teacher

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

Sela's environmental curriculum revolves around the following themes:

- **Pre-K 3-4:** Seeds, plants, fruits, vegetables, and garden picnics
- Kindergarten: Seeds
- **Grade 1:** Adaptation, habitat, and energy from the sun
- **Grade 2:** Weather patterns, organism survival in habitats, and biodiversity
- **Grade 3:** Plant and animal classification, nutrition, and the energy cycle
- **Grade 4:** Solar energy, geology, and energy cycles
- **Grade 5:** Water cycle, cells, and energy cycles



NEXT STEPS

Focus on engaging school community in projects related to composting, science fair night, curriculum-based garden activities, and garden club during aftercare.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Start an activity related to environmental literacy.
- Create interest.
- Engage others to help you per their own areas of interest.

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

2022-23 HIGHLIGHTS

- Through several International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP) units of inquiry, all students learned about the environment and our connections to the natural world.
- Garden Arts program incorporated visual arts and environmental education.
- Partnerships with community organizations enhanced our curriculum and provide resources.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Washington Yu Ying Public Charter School combines the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum framework with a Mandarin immersion program. The school was founded on the belief that bilingualism develops a greater ability to understand and communicate with other cultures, in addition to positioning students to succeed in an increasingly globalized world. As an IB World School, Yu Ying aims to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world. Yu Ying received the US Department of Education’s Green Ribbon School recognition, which acknowledges the school’s commitment to providing an educational environment that incorporates health, wellness, and sustainability practices into day-to-day school operations, such as recycling, composting, and reusable cleaning supplies for every classroom. The school continues to encourage students to make healthy and informed decisions for themselves and the world around them.



“At Yu Ying, we aim to foster reflective thinkers who understand the importance of our environment and our role in caring for it as global citizens. Whether it is exploring nature through hands-on learning in Garden Arts or reflecting on the impact our choices and habits have on the planet, students have ample opportunities to engage with and understand the world around them in a meaningful way.”

– Kristen Peck, Third Grade English Lead Teacher,
 Washington Yu Ying PCS

“Environmental literacy allows early-age kids to engage in hands-on, outdoor learning experiences that involve discovery, inquiry, and problem-solving. Kids take actions that help them learn to respect, restore, protect, and sustain the health and well-being of human communities and environmental systems. For example, our living and nonliving things unit is a wonderful unit for preschool-aged children to explore nature, and it also allows them to learn to ask questions about the world around them, because it’s real, hands-on, and children love nature.”

– Na Xian, Pre-K 3 Chinese Lead Teacher,
 Washington Yu Ying PCS

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

At Yu Ying, learning about our environment is woven into IB PYP units of inquiry from pre-K 3 through grade 5. Students engage in units under the themes “Sharing the Planet” and “How the World Works,” in addition to “How We Express Ourselves.” Yu Ying’s Garden Arts program encourages students to see the many connections between visual arts and artists and the natural world. Students also learn about the school’s environmental impact in the English and Chinese classrooms. In pre-K, students learn about growing healthy food right in the school’s gardens, and the insects that inhabit our world. Kindergarteners study worm bins and vermiculture, planting, and growing. First and second graders learn about adaptation of living things and the ecosystem. In third grade, students assess all the ways the school tries to be environmentally responsible and suggest new ways to improve the school’s systems. Fourth graders focus on renewable energy sources, and fifth graders cap off their experiences with a two-night field trip to a local national park to learn about the local watershed and how to protect it.

NEXT STEPS

Environmental literacy is built into the curriculum framework of the school. Yu Ying is committed to providing hands-on, real world experiences for students to help them build their understanding of their place in the world and our responsibilities toward the environment. Yu Ying plans to review and revise the outdoor spaces to provide a greater variety of resources for environmental engagement for students and is working on establishing sponsorship with a corporate sponsor to support growth and development of the outdoor learning environment.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Ensure that your school’s mission reflects a commitment to environmental education.
- Identify teachers, administrators, parents, and other community members who are interested in being part of environmental efforts.
- Establish authentic ways for students to be at the heart of environmental projects.





District of Columbia
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