



## Houston Elementary School



District of Columbia  
Office of the State  
Superintendent of Education

## ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

### 2017-19 HIGHLIGHTS

- Students in every grade level had more opportunities for hands-on science learning.
- Pre-K students learned about gardening and had the opportunity to grow sunflower plants, which were sent home just in time for Mother's Day.
- Kindergarten and first grade students had the chance to visit the Washington Youth Garden at the National Arboretum.
- Second grade students learned to make paper.
- Fourth grade students took a trip along the Anacostia River, and fifth grade students learned about the impact of trees on air quality.

### ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Houston Elementary is a Title I school located in Northeast Washington, DC. The school serves students in pre-K 3 through grade 5. Houston Elementary began a Spanish Immersion program in fall 2016. As of the 2018-19 school year, students in pre-K 3 through kindergarten participate in the language immersion program. The program will grow by one grade level each year, until it serves students in each grade level.

In addition to Spanish Immersion, students at Houston Elementary participate in a variety of sports including basketball, cheerleading and flag football. Special subjects include music, art, physical education, library/media services, world language, and keyboarding. The school campus is being renovated during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years.



“What I love about our school’s environmental literacy program is that it teaches students about sustainability by first teaching them to learn and care about their environment.”

– Melinda Fuller, pre-K autism teacher,  
Houston Elementary School



## ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

The environmental literacy program helps show Houston Elementary students the importance of sustainability by first developing a love and appreciation for the natural environment around them. This begins with the school's youngest students. Students in pre-K have the opportunity to grow flowers while students in fifth grade plant trees. Several grade levels visit the Washington Youth Garden at the National Arboretum, which is only a few miles from Houston Elementary. Being close by makes the Arboretum a great place to explore now and in the future. Fourth grade toured the Anacostia River, and second grade not only recycled paper but learned how to make it. These lessons and experiences as a whole connect students with the surrounding environment and will move students from simply defining environmentalism and sustainability to developing practices to support the environment.

## NEXT STEPS

Houston Elementary is in the process of developing a more sustainable and - (environmentally friendly) campus. With its new campus under construction, Houston Elementary is looking forward to having more green space for students and staff to enjoy. This includes space for outdoor learning such as gardening.

Houston Elementary also is planning to expand its paper recycling program to include bottles and cans. DCPS' new single-stream recycling program will make this change easier as it minimizes the amount of sorting for teachers, students and custodians.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- All staff needs to be on board – this includes teachers, administrators, and custodial staff.
- Communication is key – tell your staff early about the program, so they can be prepared for the opportunities that are coming. Also, communicate with them regularly via email, announcements, or in-person – whatever method works best for you and your team.
- Think long term – what do you want to accomplish after the two-year Environment Literacy Leadership Cadre period is finished?

