



Latin American Montessori Bilingual Public Charter School



District of Columbia
Office of the State
Superintendent of Education

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

2019-20 HIGHLIGHTS

- Instituted building-wide recycling initiative including cafeteria. Acquired bins and trained staff and students.
- Coordinated environmental resource experiences with several outside partners including: Audubon Naturalist Society, Casey Trees, and Anacostia Watershed Society.
- Had individual conversations with all teachers, staff and administrators in the building about the environmental initiatives and goals they have going forward.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Latin American Montessori Bilingual Public Charter School (LAMB PCS) opened its doors with just 57 students in 2003. Seventeen years later, LAMB serves a diverse student body of more than 450 students from pre-K 3 through grade 5. LAMB's mission is to create a self-directed learning environment through the Montessori curriculum in which children build the foundation and love of knowledge essential for becoming lifelong learners. LAMB uses an English-Spanish dual language immersion model, with the goal that students become fluent in both languages by fifth grade. Most of the school's staff is originally from Latin America or is descended from Latino immigrants, and this heritage is incorporated into the culture and teaching of the school.



“As a result of LAMB's involvement in the Environmental Literacy Leadership Cadre, I saw a coordinated school-wide effort around recycling for the first time this year. With better signage in the cafeteria and more extensive lessons for our elementary students, I noticed them thinking more carefully about their waste and helping each other understand what to recycle. I also observed how engaged the younger students were in in-person sessions led by Audubon Naturalist Society staff.”

– Michelle Mangan, LAMB Assistant Principal

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

In order to ensure that children experience the sense of awe and wonder integral to the Montessori philosophy, Montessori advocates presenting children with stories that highlight the whole, amazing picture of Earth and cosmos. Creating opportunities for students to get outside and positively experience natural environments helps create an understanding and appreciation of the positive role each child will eventually assume in this interconnected web of life. Serving as positive role models through our own enthusiasm is also critical to creating a future generation of environmental stewards.

Tangible systems that support sustainability at LAMB (comprehensive recycling and composting, a garden, a green building and cleaning practices, rainwater harvesting, etc.) must be accompanied by hands-on environmental experiences for students such as: planting and tending a garden, nature walks, boat rides, reading and writing activities that connect to nature, observing the moon, cooking, adopting a tree, planting trees, collecting scientific data, and on. Students can grow small plants indoors from seeds, and other plants and animals in the classroom can provide students contact and familiarity with flora and fauna. Picture cards and scientific nomenclature material augmented with stories, poems, games, and songs become more complex as students advance in grade.

NEXT STEPS

There is a lot to be accomplished at LAMB next year, particularly as the school transitions to a brand new school building. The main initiatives the school would like to see take place at the new campus are: achieving Gold-level certification for LEED, a fully functioning kitchen with made-from-scratch breakfasts and lunches, establishing a school garden with an eventual garden coordinator and cooking/nutrition initiative, effective school-wide composting and recycling program with student ambassadors, an Environmental Team through the PTO and a Green team of students, school-wide energy and waste-reducing initiatives, a natural play space/trail, and of course continued environmental field trips and resource experiences.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Face-to-face conversations are much more effective in getting buy-in and responses than emails.
- Having two cadre members seems to really contribute to the recipe for success at a school.
- Schedule resource experiences, trainings, and field trips for ASAP because you never know when a pandemic will swoop in and cancel all your best-laid plans!

