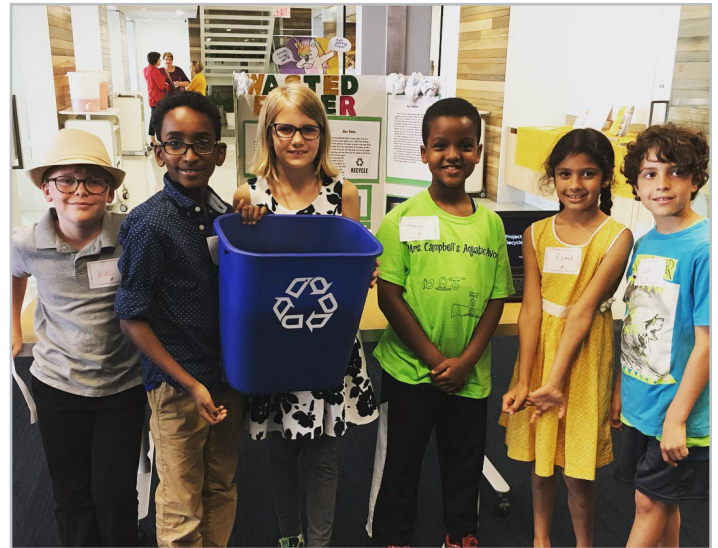




ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

2017-19 HIGHLIGHTS

- All pre-K through grade 5 students participated and will continue to participate in a variety of hands-on, engaging, and developmentally appropriate environmental education lessons, field trips, and projects throughout the year.
- In spring 2018, Lafayette Elementary School third graders successfully applied for \$2,300 in grant funds from EcoRise to support composting and recycling projects, campaigns, and materials for the 2018-2019 school year.
- In September 2018, Lafayette Elementary School launched its first environmental after-school club which meets with 50 fourth graders each Monday to discuss environmental topics and issues and to work on projects to improve Lafayette Elementary’s environmental footprint.
- With help from a partnership with FoodPrints, Lafayette Elementary School’s garden received a much needed revitalization. Students in pre-K and grade 2 are now able to plant and harvest vegetables in raised beds and learn about the benefits of preparing and eating nutritious snacks and meals, but all are community members are welcome to enjoy this revitalized space.



“ The environmental club at Lafayette has not only given my kids a forum to learn but also a platform to really engage and to be leaders in school-wide efforts to educate fellow students, staff, and teachers, and to design impactful environment programs to become a green school. Their excitement and active engagement in their projects is a parent’s dream. They are taking the lessons and initiatives to be environmentally-conscious at home, and they are having discussions on environmental impacts of things we see in our surroundings. I am sure that this program will be a lasting positive influence on ways in which my kids see their actions in relation to the natural world we live in.”

– Dee Harlow, grade 4 Lafayette Elementary School parent

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lafayette Elementary is a District of Columbia Public School in the Chevy Chase neighborhood of Washington, DC. The school serves close to 800 students in pre-K through grade 5 and two inclusive classrooms. All students are challenged to become curious observers, independent thinkers, collaborative partners, and mindful community members. Lafayette Elementary’s core curriculum focuses on English language arts (ELA), math, writing, social studies, and science, and is enhanced by both special subjects and the school’s project-based traditions. Students access differentiated instruction every day during WIN (What I Need) time and participate in other focus areas, such as the student newspaper, reading buddies, choir, and other clubs, during Flex Time. Lafayette Elementary is fortunate to have a very involved parent and guardian community that is always eager and ready to assist with whatever the school needs.

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

As Lafayette Elementary School students move throughout the grades, they build on the crucial lessons they have learned about growing plants, composting, and recycling, and their important and vital relationship and connection with the environment. Lafayette Elementary's environmental literacy program strives to implement the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) within classrooms across the school. Pre-K through grade 2 aims to build a better understanding of the importance of recycling and how that relates to a healthy environment. Students participate in the FoodPrints program and gain a stronger appreciation and understanding of gardening, composting, and cooking healthy meals. Third through fifth grade teachers utilize Full Option Science System (FOSS) kits, which are also NGSS-aligned, and include hands-on learning opportunities to engage directly with life science content. With the help of Lafayette's environmental club, students across the school participate in various plastic and paper recycling competitions that inform the student body about recycling through student-created and led skits, while also encouraging students to take action through mindful competition. All lessons are complemented with an opportunity to explore and engage with the school community garden, to take field trips to nature centers and science museums, and receive visits from the Audubon Naturalist Society, Casey Trees, and the Anacostia Watershed Society.

NEXT STEPS

Throughout the next year, teachers will work with administration to find ways to implement more of the Next Generation Science Standards into the curriculum across grade levels. The school also hopes to open dialogue and discussion among grade-level teams to discuss barriers of implementing more science curriculum within their classrooms and brainstorm solutions for embedding more environmental literacy within their teaching, whether that be through labs, cross grade-level collaboration, clubs, or math and ELA integration. Lafayette Elementary's goal is to make all environmental literacy lessons align with science standards so it remains meaningful and sustainable. Teachers also hope participate in discussions to determine how to make FoodPrints a long-term staple for not only grades pre-K through grade 2, but also for third through fifth graders.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Start small and make it so the students and their learning is always the core focus. Plus, be patient. Small steps will eventually lead to a giant step.
- Teacher and administrator buy-in can be hard, but start slowly with small goals and expand from there.
- A student voice is a strong voice. Students can be the necessary movers and shakers in a school to encourage other students, staff, and teachers to jump on board.
- Communication with and opportunities for parents to experience the work in action is essential to keeping the environmental literacy programs alive. If you can get them on board, buy-in across the school is easier.

