



## ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

### 2017-19 HIGHLIGHTS

- To build upon more than 25 years of science, gardening, and nutrition education efforts, Mann Elementary School collaborated with faculty to formalize all environmental education work into a plan/guide with both high-level and class-specific goals and accomplishments, with an emphasis on connections between new and existing programs.
- Mann Elementary institutionalized a firm commitment to nutrition education and daily waste management practices by providing weekly programming via interns and in-house resources. Initiatives included expanding the pre-K hatchling program to a school-wide chicken education program with a resident Coop on the Roof, and growing of our Tower Garden Farm program by increasing student participation in harvesting and engagement in tastings each week.
- The school continued to strengthen connections with families and the community through environmental activities. The Farm to Table internship program brought in volunteers and students from the community; the farm market program facilitated outreach to families and extended nutrition learning around locally sourced, whole foods into homes; and a new native plant program engaged students in native plant learning, increased native plant gardens on campus, and provided outreach to neighboring communities.



### ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Horace Mann Elementary School, located in the northwest corner of Washington, DC and its public school system (DCPS), has provided quality education to the children of the District of Columbia for more than 80 years. Mann Elementary is a lively place of learning where curiosity and connection are celebrated. With its diverse, multi-national population, Mann Elementary is both a global and close community of learners. The school embraces academic choice and responsive teaching. Its recently renovated and expanded campus, which features a rooftop farm, arts classrooms and an expansive outdoor playscape, invites the school community to learn within and beyond the school walls. The Mann Elementary School campus is the physical realization of the school community's most essential educational values of collaboration and connection, sustainability and stewardship, and choice and invention. Learning at Mann Elementary is purposeful, strategy-based and joyful.

“We have engaged in numerous sustainable practices across our years on the Mann campus. With the help of the environmental literacy program, we are more effectively crafting the narrative of why these learning opportunities have meaning for us and for our students. Telling why we do what we do is an essential piece to sustaining our efforts and we're making good progress here, thanks to the environmental literacy program!”

– Elizabeth Whisnant, principal, Mann Elementary School





## ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

Building upon more than 25 years of science learning, the team at Mann Elementary School has developed a plan that makes environmental learning more inter-disciplinary and comprehensive, and that guides the school community to live their day-to-day lives at school more sustainably. To shape its plan, the school has chosen five high-level goals and developed grade-level specific goals for classroom teachers, specialists, catalysts, and support teams. High-level goals include *Living and Learning Sustainably and Leading by Example* where students and staff learn the ways to live sustainably in their day-to-day lives at school, in their classrooms, in their lunchroom, and on their campus. *Appreciating the Natural Environment Around Us* continues the study of the natural elements of life on Earth and in local watersheds, and teaches members of the school community to be better stewards. *Understanding Where Our Food Comes From and Why That's Important* helps them learn about homegrown and local sourcing and teaches students about healthy eating and wellness. *Our Building is also a Teacher* uses Mann Elementary's LEED Gold-certified building and green campus as a catalyst to environmental learning efforts. *Sharing Best Practices with Our Community* emboldens students and staff as community leaders who share their environmental learning beyond the school campus with parents and families, neighbors and educational peers. Mann Elementary asks its entire community to help them track their progress in living more sustainably, and this is easily measured by the fruits of their actions.

## NEXT STEPS

Continue to work toward environmental education goals at all grade levels but will also be nimble and practical with those goals. The key to progress will be building internal partnerships and on-campus resources to make the work as practical and economical as possible.

Collect the tools necessary to assess our progress routinely, and give all level of participants – from students to faculty – the means to assess progress at living sustainably at school.

Continue to seek funding for environmental education program, support the role of School Garden/Sustainability Coordinator, and implement needed improvements in external learning areas.

Expand nutrition education goals/activities into the school kitchen and classroom routines.

Continue to find opportunities to engage the school's parent community and neighbors as partners in the learning and best practices.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Find your champions early and continue to seek out cheerleaders who can help keep your program in focus.
- Work closely with your administration to set goals, find overlaps with other school goals, and build partnerships internally and externally.
- Look outside the traditional avenues for support and accept all types of donation from grants to in-kind services. The job will not be done with your first garden implementation. You will need to continue to fund the support and growth of your programs to assure continued success.
- There is no greater good than teaching our children about the beauty and goodness of the earth and how to protect it, and many in your community will admire you for making the time to teach such lessons and secure our future on the planet.

