



School Without Walls at Francis-Stevens



District of Columbia
Office of the State
Superintendent of Education

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

2017-19 HIGHLIGHTS

- FoodPrints in-school field trips, which focus on seasonal eating and environmental stewardship, expanded from pre-K 3 through grade 5 to include the middle school students after many requests from students, staff, and parents.
- The school garden is tripling in size with a new section in Francis Park, designed by Love and Carrots, and built with student and community labor. Growing has also expanded to inside the school building with a donation of two Grow Towers from chef Jose Andres.
- During Growing Healthy Schools Month, the Student Sustainability Corps (SSC) group-written essay won a Golden Shovel Award for Best School Garden 2018-19. The students also won Best Vegetable blue ribbon at the DC State Fair with an entry of Dent Corn grown in the school's garden.
- For three consecutive years, the SSC won first place in Earth Force's Caring for Our Watershed competition. The latest project stemmed from the Department of General Services' (DGS) Reduce First Challenge, where students conducted a cafeteria waste audit and decided to try to reduce their use of single-use plastic tableware with a Finger Food Friday program. With an extended letter-writing campaign, students got DCPS and Sodexo on board. The students' idea also won DGS's Most Replicable Solution Award.
- Classroom instruction has been augmented with iTree and EcoRise lessons, hatching chicks and shad, and a Garbology unit presented by the Audubon Naturalist Society. An energy curriculum will be added to middle school science in spring 2019.



ABOUT THE SCHOOL

School Without Walls @ Francis-Stevens is a pre-K 3 through grade 8 school of more than 450 students, located in the West End neighborhood of Ward 2. Through the school lottery system, the school enrolls students from almost every ward in the District, but the student body includes 35 percent neighborhood residents, including several embassy families. The student body is comprised of 13 percent English learners and 18 percent receive special education services. While 37 percent are economically disadvantaged, statistically these students perform better than at other schools in the district. Students are strongly encouraged to remember the 4R's of respect: for self, others, property, and the rights of others to learn. School Without Walls @ Francis-Stevens enjoys many partnerships in the community, which provide global and local resources that are incorporated into an active, interdisciplinary approach to learning, ensuring all have the social and life skills needed to be responsible global citizens.



Recently, a parent stopped to ask if families could start bringing in compost from home. Their kids had become so excited learning about composting at school, they wanted to apply what they learned at school to home life."

— Ibtí Vincent, FoodPrints teacher and master gardener



ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

Teachers at various grade levels have incorporated environmental literacy resources and field trips offered through EcoRise, the Audubon Naturalist Society, the National Energy Education Development Project (NEED), and the Anacostia Watershed Society into student learning. Some environmental efforts are school-wide: many teachers have started making do-it-yourself green classroom cleaners with students, and the school has established yearly, whole school Growing Healthy Schools Month participation and a full-day Earth Day celebration.

Additionally, through experiences in the school's FoodPrints demonstration kitchen and garden, students receive their most consistent environmental literacy learning. Lessons throughout the academic year are active and developmentally geared to include topics such as plant parts, pollinators, photosynthesis, nutrition and health, decomposition/composting, recycling, soil composition, paths from farm to table, and individual responsibility in terms of personal choices. Students often observe, plant, or harvest in the school's garden, and every lesson includes cooking and eating in community. Families have reported that recipes students cook in FoodPrints classes are often prepared at home, and many of these healthy, seasonal recipes appear on our school cafeteria lunch line on FoodPrints Tuesdays.

School Without Walls @ Francis-Stevens has had both successes and challenges with school-wide composting and recycling. For the past two years, staff pre-service meetings have included joint presentations with DGS and the Audubon Naturalist Society on sorting waste in classrooms and the cafeteria.

NEXT STEPS

As DGS transitions to single stream recycling system, School Without Walls @ Francis-Stevens will have to re-think its classroom and common area systems and reeducate students, building service staff, and personnel conducting after-school programs. Upcoming Student Sustainability Corps projects include construction of several small green walls to reduce noise and improve indoor air quality, and a campaign to rotate outdoor recess areas to decrease top soil erosion. School Without Walls @ Francis-Stevens plans to identify a dedicated person to coordinate the school's application for recognition as a Green Ribbon School. Although there exists a wonderful amount of collaboration among school staff, a formal system of vertical articulation needs to be established to ensure a coherent vision of environmental learning throughout the school. Funding for the continuation of environmental literacy programs need to be identified, especially for transportation for the field trips that cement classroom learning.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Personal commitment is crucial and healthy, nutritious snacks help get people to meetings.
- Although in-person meetings are wonderful, video and phone participation works, too. Inclusive email communication works between meetings.
- Establishing our ADA accessible school garden in front of the school has encouraged partnerships with the neighborhood. People see us working and ask how they can be involved.
- Active learning with concrete materials has been a boon to English learner students, those on the autism spectrum, and those with different learning styles.
- Environmental literacy encompasses all areas and is not hard to incorporate into math, science, assorted writing styles, social studies, and history. Often times, multiple and diverse standards are incorporated into many lessons. Pointing this out can reduce resistance to change.
- Document every lesson and work day. You will appreciate having a photo record to share with others. You will also appreciate looking back to see the progress you have made.

