



District of Columbia
Office of the State
Superintendent of Education

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SNAPSHOT

2017-19 HIGHLIGHTS

- Implemented a school-wide (pre-K through grade 5) FoodPrints program, in which students prepared nutritious recipes with ingredients from the school garden and learned about the Anacostia watershed.
- Through a curriculum-based initiative, fifth grade students planted 20 trees on school grounds in partnership with Clean Air Partners and Casey Trees. Students developed an understanding of human impact on the Earth, assessed air quality in their community, and explored ways to protect Earth's resources.
- Second grade students participated in the Garbology program with the Audubon Naturalist Society. Students constructed a trash timeline and playground litter survey in order to identify ways to reduce waste.
- Teachers actively sought environmental literacy professional development and solidified partnerships for future student-driven community action projects.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Simon Elementary School serves more than 270 students in Ward 8. The school's mission is to prepare all students to be responsible citizens and afford them the opportunity to acquire the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to make decisions that lead to meaningful and productive lives. Simon Elementary strives to educate the whole child by meeting students' curricular needs and fostering social-emotional growth. Core academic subjects are supported and enhanced through the arts and technology. Simon Elementary serves students in the general education setting and students who need support services, such as speech and language, occupational and physical therapy, and social work. Teachers work hard to ensure that all students grow academically, pursue a healthy life, and are prepared for the next academic school year.



With the help of our environmental literacy partners, we have had the unique opportunity to offer our students a special connection to their environment and the world around them. What a pleasure it is to see our students begin own their responsibilities as stewards of their local community! The link to our students' social-emotional development has been especially important. Through the environmental literacy program, our students have cultivated patience, persistence, and kindness."

— Whitney Bartell, grade 5 math and science teacher, Simon Elementary





ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM

Students at Simon Elementary engage in meaningful, environment-based science activities throughout their elementary education through vertical planning and curricular alignment. Pre-K and kindergarten students are introduced to environmental education through visits to Cox Farm, Anacostia Park, and the Simon School Garden. In first grade, environmental studies continue with the FoodPrints program, where students tend the school garden, prepare healthy meals, and become familiar with watershed studies. With the Audubon Naturalist Society, second grade students learn about conservation through the science of garbage and composting. Third graders study animal habitats and plant and animal life cycles. Fourth grade students explore the Anacostia River with the Anacostia Watershed Society. Fifth grade marks the culmination of environmental studies at Simon Elementary. Fifth graders start their school year with a three-day Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience overnight camping trip in Prince William Forest Park, which includes water quality testing led by NatureBridge staff. Throughout the year, fifth graders act as the stewards of the school garden, create nutritious meals with FoodPrints, and work with Casey Trees to plant 10 trees on school grounds. This approach gives students at Simon Elementary a robust understanding of their impact on their local watershed and a legacy of student-led community action when they move on to middle school.

NEXT STEPS

During 2019, fifth grade students plan to rollout a school-wide composting initiative. In partnership with FoodPrints, fifth graders will film, produce, and edit a cooking show that educates their community about watershed initiatives, conservation, and healthy recipes.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Follow a “recipe for success.” As our students learn in FoodPrints class, following a recipe is important in getting your meal right. When rolling out an environmental literacy program at your school, it is a great idea to follow the “recipe” of schools that have successfully done it before. Listen to the advice of mentors and alumni, and have an organized implementation plan before you start.
- Consider environmental literacy professional development for your entire staff. The Anacostia Watershed Society offers staff professional development that includes a boat tour of the Anacostia River. This can promote teacher buy-in and get teachers excited about incorporating environmental literacy partnerships in their classrooms. Also, use a staff meeting to talk to teachers about the vision of vertical planning and goals for each grade.
- Have fun and bond! The environmental literacy partnerships are masterful at aligning programs with curricular goals. The partners also enable incredible opportunities for you to bond with your students. I have gone camping with my students for seven years, and leave each trip feeling close to my kids and excited for the school year.

