

Nominee * Palm Springs Community Middle School

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Nominee School or School District

Category *

Project School

Category *

Theme Green Learning Environments

Project Summary

Palm Springs Middle School focused on creating a green learning environment. Our objective was to create an outdoor learning reserve to promote hands on learning when integrating the curriculum with green topics. With the guidance and support of teachers and administration, students decreased transportation pollution by 13%, reduced the impact of solid waste on the environment by improving recycling methods, and improved the natural habitat around them to fit their learning needs. The outdoor area was then used to conduct field studies, expand research projects, and provide inspiration in various subjects. Students built and maintained a vegetable garden to conduct experiments, but the garden was not used just to teach environmental topics. Food is currently being grown to be donated to the needy. It has also been used by the Home Economics Classes when learning to cook and balance budgets. Students also

expanded and maintained the butterfly garden with native, low water plants. The area was then used to teach the scientific method and host the school science fair. Topics included “Which Type of Butterfly Plant Will Attract The Most Butterflies?” and “Which Type of Plant Grows Best in Our School Soil?” Students observed the area and researched the plants before making a hypothesis. Entire classes participated in the experiments, and collected and analyzed data. The Scientific Method has never been taught this way before. We were very excited to not only beautify our school, but to promote hands on learning that could take place in our new outdoor classroom.

Additional Project Information

Teachers collaborated in rewriting lessons to incorporate environmental topics and use our outdoor classroom when teaching the Sunshine State Standards. In mathematics, students learned to calculate mean, median, and mode by counting the number of caterpillars on milkweed, and by analyzing our school's energy reports. In Science, students did not learn the scientific method by sitting in a desk. Students went outside to conduct experiments on environmental topics. In Language Arts, students learned Haiku, Japanese poetry with 5-7-9 syllable count and having to do with nature, by using the outdoor classroom for inspiration. After reading "The Missing Gator of Gumbo Limbo," students went to the outdoor area to find the native insects and plants described in the book, as well as to practice using new vocabulary words when describing these organisms. One student described a caterpillar as a "leviathan" because he ate too many leaves off the milkweed.

Our project is easy to replicate. The community helped with some of the financing. We started small by expanding the butterfly garden, but then found other areas around campus that could be greener. The vegetable garden was then added. Our outdoor

classroom is constantly growing as students and teachers build on previous efforts. It will be sustained in the future because the kids take pride and ownership in their projects. With so many caring, it will not be forgotten. Strong leadership is not needed because we all work well together. Everyone has ideas, talents, and skills that contributed to the project, and students are eager to participate because it is fun. The students unloaded trucks of mulch, soil, and plants, helped plant, and regularly water and weed the area. They also conduct litter patrols and recycle weekly to ensure the area stays clean and environmentally friendly.

Evidence of Increased Student Achievement

Radio Green Earth invited thousands of students to write about how young people can make a positive difference in reducing our environmental impact. Three of the five essay winners were our students. Diagnostic testing in October indicated that students outperformed the district by 4% on the Scientific Method. In January, testing reflected that students improved by 12% in this category. The district improved by 1%. We also had a 13% decrease in transportation pollution, were recognized as a top recycler from SP recycling, and for being one of the most energy saving schools in Palm Beach County.

Number of >200
people
DIRECTLY
involved in the
project
implementation
(implementation

team)

Number of person-hours spent on the project. 101–200

Number of people directly reached by the project (active participants and those were directly affected). 151 – 900

Number of people INDIRECTLY reached by the project (passive recipients, those who heard about the project). > 1,200

Project History Project just started this year.

Alignment to Activities aligned to NGSSS and integrated into multiple subject

Curriculum areas.

[Next Generation](#)

[Sunshine State](#)

[Standards](#)

[\(NGSSS\)](#)

Evidence of economic benefits: Cost Savings (excluding donations)

Anecdotal

Evidence of social benefits: Parental Involvement

Anecdotal evidence of increased parental involvement.

Evidence of social benefits: Community Partnerships

Anecdotal evidence of increased community partnerships.

Evidence of Energy Savings

1-50,000 kWh

Evidence of Water Savings

None or Not Applicable

Evidence of Waste Reduction 101–500 cubic yards

Evidence of Recycling Anecdotal evidence of campus recycling

Evidence of Green Cleaning Products None or Not Applicable

Evidence of Health and Nutrition (Healthy Schools) – Does the school or school district have a health and/or green school goal included in the School Improvement Plan?

Yes

If yes, please provide the goal and a brief Our school improvement plan includes our continued effort to save energy by reducing the amount of electricity and water that the school uses. Also included in the SIP are our ongoing efforts to do

description of activities that have occurred related to this goal. (50 words max) anything feasible to utilize our outdoor classrooms to reach each student in the environmental awareness realm.

Evidence of improved Outdoor Air Quality by reducing bus idling minutes (number of buses x number of minutes of idling = reduced bus idling minutes) or using cleaner-burning alternative fuels Anecdotal evidence

Reductions in Miles Driven to School: Reductions in the number of Anecdotal evidence

car miles driven
to school by
students and
teachers
walking or
biking or using
'walking' school
buses

Evidence of Improved Schoolyard Environment / District-wide Improvement 251–500 sq. ft. of area improved / 20–50% schools improved

Litter Removal: 1–2 miles cleared of litter.
Miles of river,
coastline or
roadway cleared
of litter.

Evidence of Increased Productivity (reduced absenteeism, visits to clinic, Anecdotal evidence of reduction in student and staff sick days.

sick days)

Evidence of student

Volunteerism arising from, but not directly related to, the Green School activities.

Anecdotal evidence

Service Learning: Service Learning Hours (# of students x # of hours of direct service per student)

51–1000 service learning hours

Evidence of increased student achievement. Describe how student achievement gains were

Documented results related to increased student achievement as a result of the project.

measured

Does the school or district involve one or more school buildings meeting the requirements of an approved green building standard THIS school year?

Yes

If YES, describe how many buildings, what third-party certifier (e.g., US DOE, USGBC, Florida Green Building Coalition, Green Globes, etc.) was used and what designation level(s) (e.g.,

Our district has three LEED Gold certified schools. They are Pine Jog Elementary School, Everglades Elementary School, and CO Taylor Elementary School. There are also 11 LEED registered schools in our district.

basic, silver,
gold, platinum)
the buildings
were rated.

All information Maureen O'Shea
was correct at
the time of
submission and
is provided in
good faith. *