

Green Schools of Excellence 2014-2015 Application

Part B – Summary of 2014-2015 Green School Activities

In an ongoing effort to support our school mission and our mantra of “No Child Left Inside”, we have expanded or sustained former initiatives. In the area of School Grounds Enhancement, we added recycled plastic benches to our existing Butterfly Garden/Brook outdoor classroom, added protective fencing to our Sunflower House adjacent to a play area, and added another type of gardening system, Aeroponic, with a Tower Garden. We continue to monitor the signage and growth of our clumping bamboo in our Zen Garden which is located at the edge of the Pine Jog Forest.

Teaching and modeling the importance of sustainability in our green initiatives is demonstrated in many ways. Our Green Farmer’s Market is operating for the seventh year, providing harvested produce from our gardens. Our annual Strawberry Festival Green Market generates monies from produce donated by local farmers. All funds collected from these markets support needed materials for our extensive gardening program. These green fundraisers, along with the Enchanted Forest, help to sustain our green initiatives.

Health and Well-being is an integral part of our mission, and we use programs like the following to support the teaching and awareness of a healthy lifestyle: *All Pro Dads’ Breakfast, Mom’s Breakfast, Walk and Go Green, Jump Rope for Heart, Train like an Astronaut, OrganWise Guys*, and general nutrition, taught in conjunction with our gardening program.

We are proud to continue our extensive recycling program, which includes the office paper and comingled objects in all classrooms/offices, drink pouches, container lids, lunchables, clothing, printer cartridges, cell phones, and batteries. Other items we re-use or upcycle are items like paper towel tubes, old towels, stuffed animals and magazines for the *Save the Chimps* program; gently used books for our annual *Bingo for Books* night, Musical instruments and Art projects using all recyclable products, and Recycling Resource Centers where one can take or drop off materials. Garden materials are composted in compost bins, vermicomposted with “Can of Worms”, and eaten by our chickens, supporting our goal to recycle all organic garden waste.

Our VIP School Pool program continues to help cut down on traffic and harmful fumes in our daily parent car line. As a neighborhood school, we continue to require only one district school bus, and we are continuing our “Walking Wednesdays,” to encourage students to walk to school whenever possible. Our solar golf cart provides a great example of how a vehicle can be transformed to use renewable energy. Students receive a ride through the forest trails with the principal or assistant principal as a reward for acquiring a high number of points in the Reading Counts program.

Our many cisterns continue to provide hydration for our hydroponic gardens. Aeroponic and Hydroponic gardening practices naturally conserve water and provide two models for our students to observe. The water in our brook is condensate-fed from classroom building 4. Water in the chicken coop is provided by a drip system, using a 5 gallon jug inside the roost, along with a gravity-controlled drip system into a bowl inside the chicken run.

As a model green school, we continue to mentor other schools and provide guidance as they begin or continue their worthwhile journey in their own community.

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Curriculum integration continues to be a critical component in the success of our green initiatives. All grade levels are included in lessons encompassing many subject areas with environmental and garden themes at their core. Lessons are conducted in both indoor and outdoor classrooms. Literature-themed gardens, garden/botany and pollinator studies, habitat comparisons, and the in-depth study of our bamboo walk as a connection to this globally grown sustainable grass are just some of the highlights of our curriculum. School-wide participation in events, like walks on the Pine Jog Environmental Education Center forest trails, the Vocabulary Parade, Environmental Art Competitions, wellness/fitness programs, like Train Like an Astronaut, involve both regular and fine arts teachers, as well as enhancing and connecting learning for our students. Our Embryology Program has reached a new level this year as our students have observed chickens from their development inside the eggs in our incubator through their growth to egg-laying adult hens. In addition to the chicken biology lessons, our poultry studies have included such diverse activities as literature studies of famous chickens, writing letters and poetry to the chickens, inquiries and observing their pecking frequency in different weather conditions, and engineering different apparatus to “launch” and “sail” PEEPS (No chickens were harmed in these investigations.)

Support by our community partners plays a large part in our ability to conduct and sustain many of our green initiatives. Parent, staff, and community volunteers are responsible for the success of many of our annual events, like our Enchanted Forest partnered with FAU/Pine Jog Environmental Education Center, STEM Night, FL Ag Day in the Classroom, Embryology Program/chicken coop, Strawberry Festival where local farmers donate produce and PTA and staff conduct the activities, and the Wellington Garden Club assists with our After School Garden Club and other garden-related activities. Pine Jog received a Lowe’s Toolbox Grant for our gardens, and this generous company also paid for all of the materials needed to build our chicken coop.

No school could succeed in reaching goals and fulfilling their mission without support from the top, our administrators. Our new principal, Craig Sommer, came to us as a kindred spirit wanting to learn about all that we do at Pine Jog and to support, nurture, and enhance our green culture. He jokes that his first email he received as our new principal was about our chicken coop. His first purchase for our school was the beautiful recycled benches that we placed by the brook. Our professional development committee voiced a wish to have more professional development offered which was “Pine Jog specific,” and Mr. Sommer has supported that goal by arranging for all teachers to attend the Learn Green Conference, and by supporting a “school- site environments and green features tour” on the January, 2015 professional development day. He, with the teachers, chose to participate in professional development that supports our green culture, like Dr. Herb Broda’s “Schoolyard Enhanced Learning” and the 2015 National Green Schools Conference. All teachers received a copy of Dr. Broda’s book, and we will be conducting a book study in April, 2015 to help assure our modified mantra from “No Child Left Inside” to add “...and No Teacher Left Inside Either!” Mr. Sommer’s vision is for us to focus on planning during this summer to integrate “green” lessons which support the standards we all teach. This is the type of leadership required to continue growing and improving as a green school of excellence.