

Part B:

Poinciana Elementary School has made great strides to improve its Green School status in a sustainable and holistic way. In the past couple of years our “green” efforts have waned with involved teachers moving, falling out of good habits and a general lack of central organization and communication. This year, we have renewed our efforts with the intention of maintaining the work we already do and adding new efforts without adding burden to our school day.

Within “school ground enhancements” we have rehabilitated and made better an experimental garden within our unutilized bike rack. Teachers have collaborated to create an action plan to transform existing areas of our school grounds into native plant habitats using preexisting plants. Our immediate efforts are geared towards rehabilitating our central courtyard garden with new native plants and the removal of non-natives. This effort is currently being done with the support of local businesses, our local Boy Scout Troop, high school volunteers and our after school program.

For “curriculum integration” our school has both an easy and a hard time with this section. Poinciana Elementary is a S.T.E.M. magnet school. We have constant science-based curriculum integration on all grade levels involving studying native plants and animals, field trips to native environments and classroom experiments. Our biggest hurdle this year and going forward is properly documenting all that we do.

On the subject of “community involvement” Poinciana has successfully networked efforts between teachers and staff within the school. Also we have utilized community volunteers, businesses, fellow schools, parents and school-related organizations such as PTA and aftercare.

Concerning “administrative support” our school administration has enthusiastically supported our “green efforts”. Though the guidance of our school’s administration we have gotten many green projects back on track and we have begun new ones. Previously we had fallen out of our “green school” habits, but the foundation of support and ideas from our administration will help us grow yearly from here on out. For example, our administration takes green efforts seriously encouraging meetings and policies to reflect green ideas and standards. Recently, we have introduced a curriculum calendar that directly addresses green school education and ideas.

In the “innovation” category individual teachers to collaborating groups have taken projects upon themselves to improve our green school status. We go above and beyond every year with our “Native Florida Habitat” exhibition. This is a large multi-day event where our 4th and 5th graders build Florida habitats out of recycled materials and give tours to the younger grades educating them on what they learned.

In conclusion, most of our challenges come from communicating and properly documenting all the things that we do. While we have not applied for “Green School” status in the past couple of years we never stopped our green efforts. This year was like hitting the “reset” button on our efforts. Given that many of our programs had to be restarted, reworked and that they involved new participants to this application process it was as if we were applying for the first time. We humbly continue moving forward and improving looking forward to more successes, even next year and beyond.