



School Nominee Presentation Form

ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATIONS

School and District’s Certifications

The signatures of the school principal and district superintendent (or equivalents) on the next page certify that each of the statements below concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of their knowledge. *In no case is a private school required to make any certification with regard to the public school district in which it is located.*

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades early learning to 12.
2. The school has been evaluated and selected from among schools within the Nominating Authority’s jurisdiction, based on high achievement in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental and sustainability education.
3. Neither the nominated public school nor its public school district is refusing the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district wide compliance review. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is not subject to the jurisdiction of OCR. The nominated DoDEA schools, however, are subject to and in compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements to comply with Federal civil rights laws.
4. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the public school district concluding that the nominated public school or the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan to remedy the violation.
5. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the public school or the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
6. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the public school or public school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or public school district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.
7. The school meets all applicable federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.

U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools

Name of Principal: Mrs. Michelle Carralero

Official School Name: Millennia Gardens Elementary School

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

Date: 01/04/2022

(Principal’s Signature)

Name of Superintendent: Dr. Barbara Jenkins

District Name: Orange County Public Schools

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

Date: 01/07/2022



(Superintendent's Signature)

Nominating Authority's Certifications

The signature by the Nominating Authority on this page certifies that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of the Authority's knowledge.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades Pre-K-12.
2. The school is one of those overseen by the Nominating Authority which is highest achieving in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental and sustainability education.
3. The school meets all applicable federal civil rights and federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.

Name of Nominating Agency: Florida Department of Education

Name of Nominating Authority: Commissioner Richard Corcoran

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify to the best of my knowledge that the school meets the provisions above

Date: 02/23/2022

(Nominating Authority Signature)

SUBMISSION

The nomination package, including the signed certifications, narrative summary, documentation of evaluation in the three Pillars, and photos should be submitted online according to the instructions in the Nominee Submission Procedure.

OMB Control Number: 1860-0509
Expiration Date: December 31, 2023

Public Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1860-0509. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 37 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain benefit P.L. 107-110, Sec. 501, Innovative Programs and Parental Choice Provisions. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202-4536 or email ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference the OMB Control Number 1860-0509. Note: Please do not return the completed ED-Green Ribbon Schools application to this address.



Nominee Information

School Name: Millennia Gardens Elementary School
Address: 3515 Gdns Rdg Wy City: Orlando State: FL Zip: 32839
Twitter: @MGES_OCPS Facebook: @millenniagardenselementaryocps

Principal: Title (Mr./Ms./Mrs./ Dr.): Mrs. Carralero First Name: Michelle Last Name: Carralero
Email: michelle.carralero@ocps.net Phone: 407-845-0665

Lead Applicant (if different) Title (Mr./Ms./Mrs./ Dr.): Ms. Name: Jaegal First Name: Jenny Last Name: Jaegal
Position/Role (Teacher/ Sustainability Director/ Facilities Director/Parent): Sustainability Coordinator (District) Email: jenny.jaegal@ocps.net Phone: 407-317-3900, ext. 2037685

School Type and grade levels served:
Public school, grades 1-5

Provide percentages, if any are relevant to your school:

Free and Reduced Price Lunch: 100%
Minority: 95%
Limited English Proficient: 35%
Special Education: 11%
Graduation Rate: 100%
Attendance Rate: 90.78%

Provide the following:

Total Enrolled: 950 (as of 12/1/2021)



Documentation of Sustainability Achievement

Summary Narrative: An Overview of Work Encompassing All Three Pillars

On November 15, 2016, four teachers at Millennia Gardens Elementary School – Dawn Chehab, Kathryn Perrotta, Joshua Garrett, and Mallory Stenburg – were awarded the StateFarm Youth Advisory Board Grant of \$68,000. With this grant, the Eco Club was born, and has played a prime role in establishing a culture of environmental stewardship and conservation awareness within the school and surrounding community. Eco Club strives to inspire students to take ownership for their planet Earth, and educate others about making wiser and more sustainable choices. Since its inception, Eco Club has accomplished many sustainability projects around campus, which will be further described throughout this application. In fact, Millennia Gardens Elementary has been a consistent winner of the Orange County Public School's Green Schools Recognition Program since 2016, with the exception of year 2020, which is the year we among many other schools struggled through the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Eco Club extended their program to Westridge Middle School, which is where most of our students attend after graduation, in order to provide continued support towards their sustainability journey.

The success of our sustainability program has been achieved thanks to the growing community of passionate teachers at Millennia Gardens, that not only educates and inspires our students to take action in creating a sustainable community, but also extends their relationships to community partners including Sea World, VoLo Foundation, Cleo Institute, and the Everglades Foundation in order to provide a dynamic and memorable learning experience for our students. We have teachers that received the designation of Florida Agriculture in the Classroom Teachers of the Year, and the National Agriculture in the Classroom Teachers of the Year. Our school received several designations such as the Golden Shovel, Eco School, and Outstanding Sustainable Program LEEDership, which we are the only school in the district to have ever received this designation from the U.S. Green Building Council's Central Florida Chapter. Additionally, we are an Everglades Champion School five years in running, and received certifications from the Environmental Protection Agency for maintaining safe indoor air quality on campus. We have a large outdoor field, where two areas are certified wildlife habitats from the National Wildlife Federation, and our gardens are Food and Drug Administration certified. Furthermore, our teachers and staff meet on a monthly basis to discuss improving sustainability initiatives, which are then shared to the entire school by student-led energy and waste audit teams during announcements.

The foundation of our Eco Club is reducing our environmental impact and costs. We have energy and water efficient electronics and fixtures installed throughout the school, and both consumptions are actively monitored through a computerized management system. Additionally, our students take the lead in creating a school culture that conserves energy and water by conducting audits and putting up signs at each light switch and water faucets. In addition to reducing our reliance on energy and water, we create our own green energy through the pedal-a-watt system bicycle generator to power our school gardens, and salvage rain water with rain barrels, as well as condensation from portable air conditioning units with buckets to water our flowers in the garden. Moreover, we conserve our natural resources and precious landfill space by practicing the three Rs – reduce, reuse, and recycle. For waste reduction, we lease our copy machine instead of purchasing, and replenish office supplies as



needed. For reuse, we encourage students and staff to choose reusable items instead of disposable ones. For example, we have a water bottle refill station, and our offices use ink cartridges that can be refilled. Furnitures that are no longer needed are sent to the District's Surplus warehouse to be used by other schools, and our parking lot has a clothing donation drive. Used office papers are used as note pads or scrap papers as well. For the last R – recycling – we recycle the accepted materials in recycling bins that are found throughout the campus, and our students take charge of the collection and dumping in the recycling dumpster to ensure proper recycling. Furthermore, our food waste is composted on-site, and the soil is used in our school gardens that are located both indoors and outdoors.

We also recognize that one of the three pillars of sustainability is our people. In order to improve student and staff health and wellness, we ensure optimal indoor and outdoor air quality through hazardous material testing, regular maintenance, training, and policies. The emotional and social wellness is addressed by our social emotional learning (SEL) committee, school Counselor, and Psychologist. Students also get to connect with nature in a stress-free environment while spending time planting, maintaining, and harvesting at our gardens – all of which are right in our backyard. The produce grown by the students are used in nutrition activities, where they learn how to cook with healthy vegetables and herbs they grew themselves. There are plentiful opportunities for students to get physically active as well thanks to our fitness clubs, walk to school day, bike to school day, field day, and Kite Day, where students spend an entire afternoon flying kites at the school yard. The highlight of all physical activities is the fun field trips that the students frequent thanks to the partners mentioned before. Some of the students' favorite field trips are the Everglades Camping trip, and feeding the manatees at Sea World with the lettuce they grew from our 50-tower hydroponic garden. Our teachers are always looking to connect our students with community leaders and organizations by hosting, partnering, and participating in events such as Trash 2 Trends, Science Night, and the inaugural 5K at the Central Florida Earth Day Celebration at Lake Eola Park.

Our sustainability initiatives are accompanied with effective environmental and sustainability education, which is delivered through interdisciplinary lessons through collaborative efforts. Our goal is to increase student awareness and critical thinking skills, so they can become capable of developing solutions to various environmental issues for our community. We are proud of our fifth-grade students who combined their knowledge from lessons in civics and climate change to write letters to the City of Orlando's Mayor Buddy Dyer, convincing him to sign the Declaration of Climate Emergency, to which they succeeded. In another success case, our students analyzed our school's water consumption during a math activity, and discovered the need to reduce their water consumption. As a result, they came up with the idea to collect condensation from portable AC units with buckets to water the flowers with that water instead of using our potable water. After learning about the importance of biodiversity in class, our students became adoptive parents to an emperor penguin chick, green turtle, polar bear, and a manatee, because they wanted to lend a helping hand to the World Wildlife Foundation, who's mission is to protect species and their habitats around the world. Furthermore, we value field trips, where students can experience what they've learned in the classroom, so our students often visit our wildlife sanctuary, as well as external environmental centers, wildlife refuge, etc.



Through the leadership and support of dedicated teachers and staff, valued community partners, and the District, our school has been able to successfully raise future leaders that will treasure our environment, pursue continued learning opportunities, and become empowered and competent members of society. We pride ourselves through the student-led sustainability initiatives that make a positive lasting impact in not only an individual and school level, but also in a community level. As we make continued strides towards sustainability and resiliency, we would be honored to become a Green Ribbon School and serve as an example to other schools that are wanting to implement similar programs, or perhaps even inspire schools that haven't had the opportunity to explore the option of going green. We are thankful for the progress we've made so far, and are excited to see what the future holds for our beloved Millennia Gardens Elementary.

Narrative for Pillar I: Efforts to Reduce Environmental Impact and Costs

At Millennia Gardens, students are not only taught about greenhouse gas emissions, energy conservation, and renewable energy in classrooms, but they are also encouraged to take on leadership roles in school-wide energy conservation efforts, where they would remind fellow classmates and staff to turn off lights through signs and decals located on light switches, use classroom energy conservation checklists to conduct energy audits, and monitor energy usage in class. Our District supports our energy saving initiatives by monitoring our energy consumption through a computerized Energy Management System, providing energy efficient light fixtures, as well as Energy Star electronics including smartboards, printers, computers, and refrigerators. As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we also installed a bipolar ionization system that not only keeps the air cleaner, but also reduces the amount of outside air that needs to be cooled and dehumidified. Our campus also has light sensors that will automatically turn the light off when the room or hallway is empty. Many teachers will take advantage of natural lighting as well whenever available, instead of turning on the lights all the time. In addition to conserving energy, our students also generate green energy on campus with a pedal-a-watt system bicycle generator, and use the collected energy in our gardens, which are further described later on.

We have a No Idling Policy for our school buses and personal vehicles, and provide safe sidewalks and bike racks to promote alternative modes of transportation, such as walking and biking to school, thereby reducing exhaust emissions from our school grounds. Each year, we host Walk to School Day and a Bike to School Day, where students receive a prize for participating, and this allows us to introduce these healthy and environmentally friendly modes of transportation. Additionally, we foster a carpooling community among our students and staff, and students – including the tutoring students and those that live two miles or further away from our school – are arranged to take the school bus as opposed to having their parents picked them up. Students that live under two miles away participate in Walking School Bus, where school staff walk with students to school from the furthest points to ensure their safety and reduce need for parent drop-off and pick-up. Students actively monitor the number of cars coming through our car rider line each month, and they graph out the decrease thanks to our emissions reduction efforts. While not necessary for coming to school, students learned about other types of public transportation from a SunRail representative that offered opportunities for students to ride the SunRail.

Our students are no strangers to electric vehicles. Through our partnership with LYNX, we invited guest speakers to talk about their fleet of electric public buses. In fact, our students rode one of their electric buses when they first debuted. The LYNX representative encouraged and provided resources for our students to get family passes. We wrote letters and petitioned to have a LYNX bus stop placed in front of our campus, but it fell through due to the bus stop being located across the street, which posed safety issues for our students crossing the road. To encourage EVs among staff members and parents, we have designated parking spots for EVs.

Water is another precious natural resource that our students and staff learn to appreciate and actively conserve. There are water saving signs and decals located above every sink to remind users to turn off the faucet when not using, and students conduct classroom water use audits, as well as school-wide water awareness campaigns. In addition, our water faucets are low flow (0.5 gpm) while being equipped with an auto shut off system, and the toilets are low flow as well (1.25 gpf). While conserving potable water, we collect rain water with rain barrels, as well as condensation from portable air conditioners to use in watering the flowers in the gardens. The District monitors our water consumption the same way they monitor our energy consumption, so if there is a suspicious spike in water usage, it is investigated immediately for a potential leak. As a result of our water conservation efforts, we reduced our water use intensity (WUI) by 17.1 % from July 2020 to June 2021 as indicated in the figure below. Furthermore, we ensure good quality drinking water for the students and staff by providing filtered water bottle filling stations.

WUI Comparison	Target	Jul 2020 - Jun 2021	WUI Diff	WUI Diff %
Water (Kgal/SqFt)	0.05	0.04	-0.009	-17.1% ▼

WUI Progress Graph

We understand that landfill space is another finite resource that we must conserve for our future generation. To reduce our contribution to the landfill, we lease our copy machines instead of purchasing, and acquire supplies when they are needed, rather than purchasing in bulk and storing the rest. We also encourage the use of reusable items as opposed to disposable ones; for example, we have a water bottle refill station to encourage the use of reusable water bottles, and our ink cartridges are refillable. If we have furniture that is no longer needed at our school, we send it to District’s Surplus so they can be reused by another school or Department, instead of going to the landfill. There is a clothing donation station to give usable clothing to people in need. Used office papers are also used for note pads or used in classrooms for scrap paper. Reuse or upcycling activities and projects, such as making a reusable bag out of an old t-shirt, are integrated into classroom lessons as well. For waste that are generated, we maximize the recovery of materials through the recycling of plastic bottles, jars, and tubs, food and beverage cans, glass bottles and jars, cardboard, paper, and electronics. The recycling bins for these materials except for electronics are located throughout campus, and they are collected by the students and dumped into the recycling dumpster outside, which is then picked up regularly by our recycling vendor Waste Management to take them to a material recovery facility. In addition to recycling, we also compost food waste on

site and use the nutrient rich soil in our school gardens. Any items that cannot be reduced, reused, recycled, or composted will be properly disposed of regularly by our waste vendor, City of Orlando, to keep the school grounds clean and free of pests. If there are any hazardous waste, the District's Environmental Compliance office takes care of it and safely dispose of the items.

The educational benefits of outdoor learning are recognized and highly valued at Millennia Gardens, so we allow our students to immerse themselves in our ecologically beneficial uses of grounds. We have a ¼ acre wildlife sanctuary that is comprised of a National Wildlife Federation designated monarch butterfly weigh station, a gopher tortoise habitat, which we hold a permit for, frog pond, osprey perch, two bat houses, and native vegetation. In addition, we have a vibrant school garden that is certified by the FDA. One of our gardens is a Pulse Nightclub tragedy memorial pollinator garden made of recycled tire planters. Another is a cultural garden that is used to grow herbs and vegetables for traditional dishes from cultures represented by our student body and staff. Our most unique garden feature is our 50-tower hydroponic garden, where we grow lettuce for the manatees at Sea World. Furthermore, we have smaller gardens next to our portable classrooms, that include an aquaponics system. Gardening happens indoors as well in three of our classrooms, which are equipped with growing stations and lights. Students can grow small plants from these classroom gardens, and bring them home to plant in their home gardens. Besides the wildlife sanctuary and gardens, there is also an Everglades themed play area, which tells the story of a water droplet's journey from Orlando, through Lake Okeechobee, then the Everglades, and into the Florida Bay. Each grade level has a curriculum for this area, and they are able to see the actual vegetation found in the waterway, and pictures from the students' camping trip to the Everglades.

Narrative for Pillar II: Efforts to Improve the Health and Wellness of Students and Staff

A major incentive of Millennia Gardens' sustainability initiatives is the improvement of the health of our students and staff. We strive to achieve clean indoor air by protecting our buildings from outside contaminants through proper weather stripping, MERV 13 air filters that are replaced every 90 days, and a bipolar ionization system that reduces the entry of outside allergens. In the case of an asthma or allergy attack, our school has a medical emergency plan that includes information about asthma and allergies, and our staff are well trained on reducing and handling those emergency situations, which we received an EPA certification for. The Maintenance Department cleans the air handler units and coils on an annual basis. Our Custodial Department provides a crew that follows a variety of daily, weekly, monthly, and annual tasks that keep our entire campus clean, and they prioritize the use of environmentally friendly chemicals

We follow the District's Management Directive B10 Resource Conservation that says to maintain indoor temperature between 74 °F and 77 °F during occupied hours, and humidity under 65%. This helps us prevent mold and mildew while conserving energy and District costs. Our Custodial Crew also follows a mold and mildew prevention procedure that includes correcting and eliminating the cause of conditions that is favorable to mold and mildew growth. However, in the case of any indoor environmental issues such as mold and mildew do occur,



the assigned Environmental Standards Coordinator for our school conducts an indoor environmental quality assessment (IEQ). The most recent IEQ was conducted in September 2021 for surficial mold in one of the bathrooms in the Media Center. Using visual inspection of the bathroom and coordination with Facilities Maintenance to inspect the exhaust ventilation, it was presumed that the mold growth occurred as a result of high relative humidity getting trapped in the room due to daily temperature changes. It was recommended that the restroom door is left open to reduce buildup of humidity in the room, especially after a floor wash. A mold remediation vendor was called in later to wipe clean the walls, door, and ceiling in the bathroom.

Our campus is 100% smoke free both inside and outside, and school buses and cars follow a no idling policy, in addition to having the option of walking or biking to school through guarded sidewalks and bike racks to keep our outdoor air clean as well. We get daily garbage pickup from the City of Orlando from Monday through Saturday to prevent any school waste from sitting on campus for more than a day, which prevents pests. The District's Grounds, Landscaping, and Pest Control Department follows a strict integrated pest management (IPM) program that includes regular monitoring to detect problems early, acting against pests only when necessary, choosing the most effective option with the least risk to people and the environment, and applying biological knowledge about pests to create long-term solutions. This program has greatly improved the environment of our school by eliminating the use of toxic chemicals and pesticides, and thus protecting the health and safety of our students and staff. The IPM program has also significantly increased the effectiveness of the treatment and control of unwanted pests by using treatments tailored to specific pests.

Furthermore, in March, 2020, Terracon performed a limited National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) survey at our campus and detected no asbestos in any of the bulk samples they collected. A lead test was unnecessary because our school was only built in 2016, however the City of Orlando conducts an annual water test to ensure safe water quality for our school.

Our sustainability programs also go hand in hand with our school's wellness goals. We teach students the importance of mindfulness through Mindful Mondays, where students complete social emotional learning (SEL) activities. Our SEL committee meets monthly to discuss wellness initiatives; for example, they are preparing a staff relaxation lounge. We offer counseling services from external companies for our students, in addition to in-school counseling that is performed by our school counselor, who meets with her counselor squad on a weekly basis to discuss social and emotional issues our students may be facing at school and home. The school's Psychologist provides evaluations to support the students' mental and physical health. Other social services such as food, financial, and holiday assistances are provided as well. Students are also provided with eyeglasses when necessary after yearly vision checkups.

Our gardens that were previously mentioned in the Narrative for Pillar I, were built by our students with the help of faculty supervision, and in our gardens students learn to grow and harvest a variety of vegetables and herbs, which they then learn how to cook with either in the school kitchen or in their home with their parents. In addition to experiencing the planting, growing, and harvesting of healthy produce first hand, they also learn about healthier food options in nutrition class, where they complete activities about the fruit and vegetable of the



week, and partake in activities such as making a smoothie for National Breakfast Week. On parent nights, we offer health screenings and cooking classes to students and parents. Our valued staff members are not excluded in our health and wellness initiatives. Healthy team emails with healthy life style tidbits are shared to the staff on a monthly basis.

Our students also get plenty of opportunity in school to get physically active through our extracurricular fitness clubs such as the Running Club, which is especially beneficial for behavioral students. Our fun and fitness committee plans a variety of outings throughout the year, such as the breast cancer walk/run. We have a walk to school day, bike to school day, and a Kite Day, where students built their own kites and spent the afternoon flying kites in the outdoor area by our gardens. Every year, we have a field day, where the entire school spends the whole day outside participating in various physical activities. Our students also participate in numerous field trips throughout the school year, thanks to our partners including Sea World and the Everglades Foundation. Furthermore, we partnered with VoLo Foundation to create the inaugural 5K at the Central Florida Earth Day Celebration at Lake Eola Park.

A big part of our wellness goals is to connect our students with their families and outside partners, and teaching them the importance of community. Prior to the pandemic, we hosted a Science Night, where approximately 300 students, parents, staff, and community partners including the Orlando Utilities Commission and UF-IFAS attended to learn about energy and water conservation, sustainable eating, value of the Everglades, etc. We are also the only school that participates in Trash 2 Trends, which is an annual event where our students design a fashion outfit with discarded material that would otherwise end up in the landfill. One of our biggest partners is Sea World, and we share a unique six-year relationship, where we grow lettuce for the manatees at Sea World, and in turn Sea World provides us with field trips, guest speakers, and job shadow opportunities.

Narrative for Pillar III: Efforts to Ensure Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education

Environmental and sustainability education at Millennia Gardens is integrated in more than one subject area throughout the different grade levels, and it is common practice for teachers to collaborate and design interdisciplinary projects for multiple classes. A great example of this is when our fifth-grade civics and environmental lessons were combined to empower our students to utilize their voice as citizens of the City of Orlando to make policy changes in a community level. Our students wrote persuasive letters to Mayor Buddy Dyer to voice their concerns on climate change, and presented them during a Zoom meeting with the Mayor and the City's Sustainability and Resilience Director, Chris Castro. The students urged the Mayor to sign the Declaration of Climate Emergency in order to actively combat climate change in a local level, and we are proud to say that our Mayor did sign the Declaration! Inspired by our students' integral role in this initiative, Laura Betts from the CLEO Institute commended our students for their civic participation in this Declaration, and presented them with certificates of making a difference, along with the book "No Voice Too Small, Fourteen Young Americans Making History" for each student.

Our lessons target to increase student awareness and critical thinking skills regarding environmental topics, so they can connect environmental issues with their community and



formulate solutions. A successful student-led example of this is when students were analyzing our school's water consumption during a math activity, and identified a need to conserve more water. The students then observed condensation gathering underneath portable air conditioning units while spending time outside, and developed a solution to put buckets under each AC unit to collect the condensation. The collected water was then used to water the flowers in our school gardens. In another example, students learned about the importance of biodiversity and endangered species around the world during class and field trips. They took it upon themselves to vote to adopt an emperor penguin chick, green turtle, polar bear, and a manatee in order to help the World Wildlife Foundation protect species and their habitats.

Students are also taught to explore and observe the outdoors, whether it be our school's wildlife sanctuary or external nature preserve. We frequent in person and virtual field trips to local environmental centers, wildlife refuges, gardens, parks, etc. These field trips are coupled with in-class projects and presentations that allow students to demonstrate first-hand knowledge of local environments they visit. Through our numerous partnerships with environmental organizations, our students have multiple opportunities to contribute to larger, ongoing citizen science projects, where they can contribute observations and data. A prime example of this is our lesson on the Everglades, where students learn about the ecological niche of the majestic wetland south of us. In the aforementioned Everglades themed play area outside, students can see the story of a water droplet that travels from Orlando, through Lake Okeechobee, through the Everglades, and into the Florida Bay. The highlight of the Everglades lesson is the Eco Club's Everglades camping trip, where they get to be the water droplet departing from Orlando. After learning about the Everglades in class and in the play area, this camping trip allows them to experience the real-life water system that involves the Everglades, while spending quality outdoor time with their classmates, teachers, and parents. Furthermore, we have the Everglades Literacy Program as a call to action for schools, teachers, and students to ensure that future generations of Florida residents understand the ecological and economical value of the Everglades ecosystem.