

Maya Lin First Graders Speak Out Against Plastics



Students in Ms. Eichel's class got to listen to artist Angela Pozzi talk about her sculptures, including the 11-foot penguin made entirely of plastic trash.

First graders from Maya Lin School attended the launch of a new campaign against single use plastic at the Oakland Zoo last month. The field trip was part of a months-long exploration of the issues with plastic and why we should use less of it.

"We came because we wanted to see what the zoo does to help the ocean and so we could get ideas of more things to do to help," says 6-year-old Yael, a student in Terri Eichel's first grade class at the school.

The zoo's goal is to eliminate most single-use plastic -- including from its snacks, beverages, and gift store -- making it the first zoo in the country to take such a comprehensive approach to plastic reduction. The zoo is also eliminating single-use plastic in its daily internal operations, including in its Animal Care Department, administrative offices, and trash processing.

As part of the launch of its campaign, the zoo unveiled an "Art to Save the Sea" exhibit at the Flamingo Plaza. The exhibit consists of sculptures -- including an 11-foot penguin, a six-foot mako shark, and a six-foot otter -- all made by artist Angela Pozzi of plastic trash that washed ashore on Oregon beaches. Pozzi works with the non-profit Washed Ashore in Oregon, which aims to educate about the dangers of plastic pollution in the ocean by creating art from it.

Students in Terri Eichel's kindergarten class at Maya Lin have been learning about the dangers of plastic pollution this year and even did an audit of all the trash at the school to see what the greatest source of single-use plastic is on the site. (As it turns out, the biggest source is snack wrappers). With their reading buddies, the kindergartners also wrote speeches about the importance of reducing plastic pollution and then took their message to other Maya Lin classes.



The eye of the penguin is made of a chewing tobacco lid, a water bottle bottom, and a bottle cap.



The first graders couldn't write notes to help them remember what to say, so they drew pictures on notecards," Eichel explains. The students also created posters advocating for using less plastic that were hung at the zoo the first weekend of the art exhibit and made their own art out of wrappers and other plastic trash and displayed it at their school.

"It was a good project because it helped the students become more aware of the problems with plastic and also helped them start conversations with their families," Eichel says.

You can find more information about the Oakland Zoo's #NoToPlastic campaign [here](#).