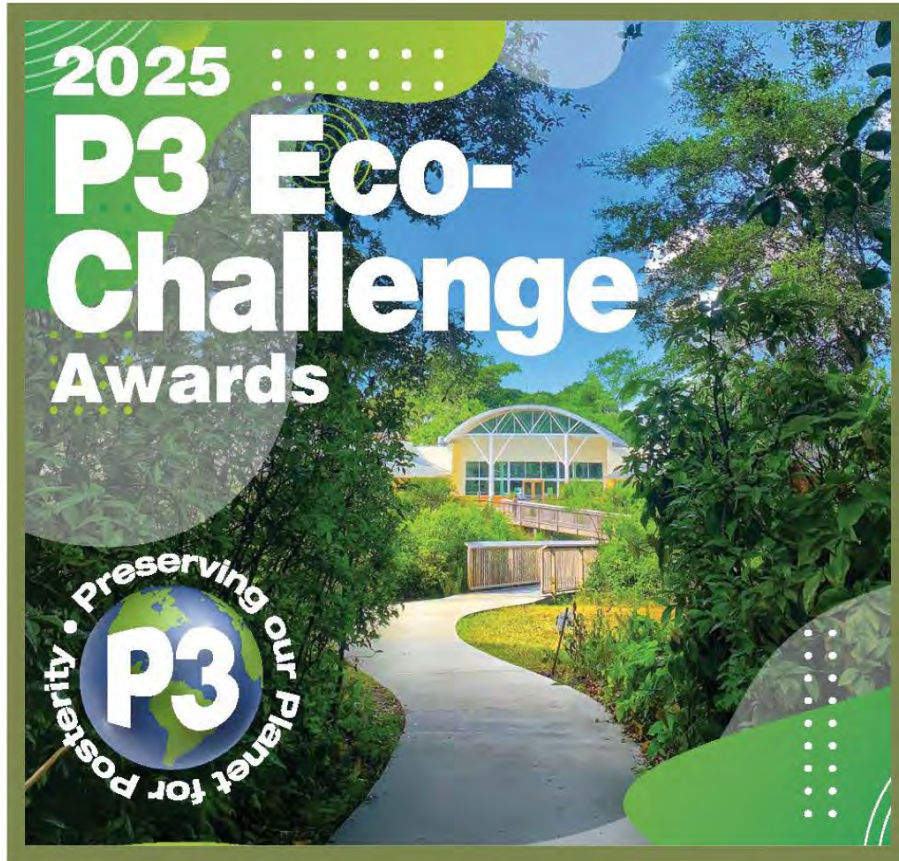


# NOMINEES



**LONG KEY NATURE CENTER, DAVIE**

**MAY 7, 2025**



Information from the nominee's application

## **STUDENT NOMINEES**

### **Elementary School Students**

#### **Bella Bolivar** **Silver Shores Elementary School**



Bella Bolivar is an extremely dedicated member from Silver Shores 2024-2025 Eco Club group. This individual goes above and beyond the school-wide expectations set in place. This student has a passion outside of these school walls. This is Bella's second year in the Eco Club. The club meets twice a week; Mondays are for new members, and Thursdays are for the members with prior experience. Bella voluntarily chooses to attend the club on Mondays to help new members, clean up with them, and to give them advice on growing their fruits and vegetables. On Thursdays, Bella is always one of the first people to offer up her assistance, isn't afraid to get dirty in the garden, and is always motivating her fellow club members to work alongside her. Almost every week, Bella brings chrysalides to school in a screened-off tent to release in our school butterfly garden. It helps to cultivate the native flowers already there and encourages other insects to hang around. When she is not at the Eco club, you will find Bella every day during her Recess and P.E. time exploring the school grounds. She has a following that she takes the time to educate and get them involved. You will see her with a bug catcher around her neck, or her with the Butterfly cage, releasing them with her classmates, and capturing a new and exciting insect she finds. She has made such a positive influence on students who aren't even club members, and now they have a profound interest in the environment thanks to Bella.

#### **Radha and Om Dandekar** **Central Park Elementary School**

Radha, a fourth grader, and Om, a second grader at Central Park Elementary, exemplify the spirit of environmental stewardship through their consistent, hands-on service and their drive to educate and inspire others. As Everglades Ambassadors, they have embraced early-morning clean-ups, campus gardening, and sustainability projects with a remarkable sense of responsibility for their age. Their contributions extend beyond the classroom—from creating eco-education displays and leading morning announcements to participating in community tree plantings and butterfly releases. Their dedication is rooted in deep, place-based learning—whether exploring sea turtle nesting grounds, identifying native plants at BioBlitz events, or attending webinars and museum exhibits to expand their environmental knowledge. They creatively translate what they learn into action, developing original projects like compost systems, Everglades-themed bulletin boards, and award-winning sustainability solutions for local STEM challenges. More than participants, Radha and Om are leaders who consistently model civic responsibility, critical thinking, and compassion for the natural world—motivating their peers and community to join them in protecting our planet.



## **Paris Daza**

### **Silver Palms Elementary School**

Paris is an exceptional 4<sup>th</sup> grade student at Silver Palms Elementary. She consistently demonstrates a strong work ethic, goal-oriented mindset, and strives diligently to achieve success in everything she does. Despite the demands of her academic responsibilities, she actively participates in extracurricular activities, including Debate Team, the S.A.V.E. Promise Club, and chorus. As she gains a deeper understanding of the environment through daily instruction and participating in the Youth Climate Summit, she has gained a sincere interest in promoting environmental sustainability and contributing to the health of our planet. She frequently offers thoughtful suggestions to teachers and her peers on initiatives to help maintain a healthy and clean school environment. She exhibits outstanding leadership qualities and is a problem solver. Paris is a valued member of our school community!



## **Zoe Hesler**

### **Liberty Elementary School**



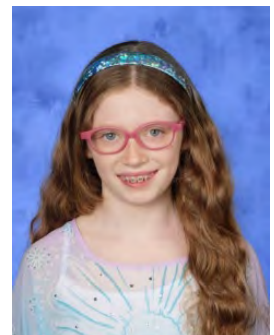
Zoe is an outstanding member of our gardening club and one of my fourth-grade STEM students. She joined the club as a third grader, showing her passion for the environment and teamwork. Now in fourth grade, she continues to demonstrate the same dedication. Zoe is always the first to arrive at our club meetings, ready to help with gardening, watering, and keeping the space clean. She works well with others, sharing her ideas in a creative and friendly way. Beyond the gardening club, Zoe is also active in the Scheme Club. She brings her enthusiasm and creativity to both clubs and encourages her younger brother to join and help out. Her leadership and teamwork skills inspire others to contribute and care for the environment. Zoe's commitment to sustainability extends beyond the club, as shown by her participation in the "Drop Savers" poster contest. Zoe truly deserves recognition for her dedication and passion

for making the world a greener place. Her relentless efforts and commitment to making a positive impact on the planet make her an extraordinary role model for all.

## **Riley Kenney**

### **Park Springs Elementary School**

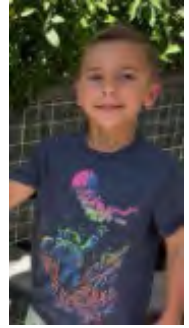
Riley is a 5th grade student at Park Springs Elementary. She has been an honorary Environmental Club member since before she was in kindergarten and an official member for the past three years. While watching her two older sisters actively attend PSE, she fell in love with the environmental club. She happily attended almost every back to school and beach clean-up prior to her official acceptance. Riley would even wear her sister's Environmental Club shirt and tell younger students about what projects the Environmental Club was currently working on. As an official member, Riley has been a student leader and environmental activist promoting various incentives to her classmates and teachers. She is always happy to collect recycled items to show how "trash" can be repurposed into something new and cool! Riley's bubbly personality and smile can brighten any room. Her creativity shines through both her academics and extracurriculars like EWPSE news crew, dance and chorus. She is an advocate for all creatures of all sizes and is always excited to give her time to help Mother Earth!



## **Cameron Swenson**

### **Chapel Trail Elementary School**

Cameron Swenson, a 3rd grader at Chapel Trail Elementary, has flourished since joining the Green Team, unveiling a deep passion for nature and the environment. Arriving at school as soon as the gates open, he eagerly pulls on his gardening gloves, ready to tackle the day's work. He actively participates in campus cleanups, weeding, planting, and especially enjoys working in the vegetable garden—so much that he inspired his family to grow their own food. At home, he carefully tends to his plants, learning propagation techniques to create a sustainable garden—yes, he proudly uses the word "sustainable"! Beyond school, Cameron takes his commitment further, joining community cleanups and picking up litter at parks and beaches. His enthusiasm is contagious, inspiring both peers and family, and his dedication gives us great hope for the future. At such a young age, Cameron is already making a lasting impact on our environment, and we can't wait to see how his influence grows.



## **Middle School Students**

### **Davie Barbosa**

#### **Crystal Lake Middle School**

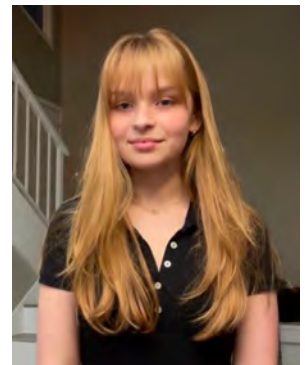


Davie Barbosa is a 7th grade magnet student. He is highly successful in the GEARS2 Comprehensive Science, HS Physical Science, Algebra 1 Honors, and Spanish classes and is also a dedicated student leader in my Food Forest Elective class. Davi has strong initiative and goes well beyond what is expected on a daily basis. He constantly looks to help others and the environment. He is the first one in the garden and never stops working. Additionally, he motivates others to do the same. He is definitely a role model for all students at the school. He has an amazing and outgoing personality with a contagious smile!

### **Pilar Reverte**

#### **New River Middle School**

Pilar Reverte, an 8th-grade student at New River Middle School, is the president of the Eco Sharks Club, actively addressing environmental issues by rebuilding the school garden and reestablishing a recycling program. Pilar is the leader for the Everglade Champion Schools 6-12 - "Magical Mangroves." Project. She balance her rigorous academics, leadership, and service, she is enrolled in three high school-level honors courses and has earned Principal Honor Roll recognition. As a leader in the National Junior Honor Society, Pilar spearheaded a fundraiser for a local animal shelter. Her musical achievements include first-chair positions in jazz band and wind ensemble, and membership in the All-County Honor Band. Pilar also promotes peace and inclusivity through the Choose Peace Stop Violence Club, Human Relations Council, and S.A.V.E. Promise Club. Over her three, at NRMS Pilar has become a respected role model, demonstrating unwavering commitment and enthusiasm in all her endeavors.



## High School Students

### **Naila Dorvil** **Blanche Ely High School**



Naila is an exceptional senior at Blanche Ely High School. She is known for her dedication and drive. With a passion for both academics and extracurricular activities, Naila selflessly serves as the President of the Science Club, which focuses on the application of scientific methods, creativity, and engagement of environmental systems. Naila is particularly interested in exploring how changes in climate due to pollution impacts coral reef ecosystems. She participates in community services events that involve helping the environment and figuring out a way to reduce climate change. Some examples from this year include the Mr. Blanche Ely Community Cleanup, the BEHS National Beta Club Beach Cleanup, and the school Recycling Program. She has built a well-rounded profile, her leadership skills shine through her collaboration with peers in various school clubs and community initiatives. Naila is committed to making a difference, constantly striving to push boundaries and achieve her goals in and outside of the classroom. As she prepares for the future, she remains focused on furthering her education and making a lasting impact.

### **Marie Francois** **Miramar School**

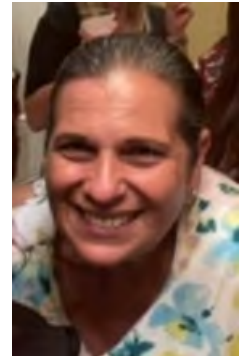
Marie Francois exemplifies what it means to be a student leader of excellence, service, and integrity. As Vice President of the Environmental Club, Marie plays a central role in organizing and executing service projects that benefit both the school and local community. She is the driving force in keeping club officers on task, ensuring that goals are met with precision and purpose. Her ability to lead with compassion while holding peers to high standards sets her apart as an outstanding role model. Marie's leadership extends beyond the Environmental Club. She is the current Secretary of the Class of 2025 Student Government Association and President of the Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) Club. In every role, she demonstrates a strong commitment to creating a positive and productive school environment. A dual enrollment student, Marie balances college-level coursework with high school classes, an afterschool job, and extracurricular responsibilities. Her dedication to self-improvement is reflected in her enrollment in an SAT Prep course, showing her continued pursuit of academic excellence. Marie encourages her peers to use their skills and talents to uplift others, and her ability to lead with vision and accountability makes her an essential and inspiring presence on campus. She is one that personifies the word diligence as evident by her tireless dedication, exceptional leadership, and unwavering commitment to service.



## **CUSTODIAL STAFF NOMINEES**

### **Lamprine Antonopoulos Nob Hill Elementary School**

Lamprine, better known to staff and students as Peggy, has been at Nob Hill Elementary for over 10 years. Before becoming a night custodian, she was a dog handler for a student that was in our InD program for several years. Peggy takes pride in her work and connection with the teachers she works with. She loves gardening and brings in clippings from her garden at home to add to her area in front of the office. Peggy takes the time while she is cleaning each classroom to talk with the teacher about eco-friendly methods to keep their class clean. If the teacher is starting a garden or planting a tree, Peggy will share her knowledge about plants to help them decide what and where they should plant. She is very familiar with the life cycle of the butterfly and helps teachers that bring in caterpillars provide the appropriate plants for food. Peggy brings in cuttings to help teachers that are starting gardens around the school. She also helps to maintain the gardens during vacation or when students and staff are not in school.



### **Unique Burke Royal Palm Elementary School**



Mr. Unique Burke works to create a sustainable environment at the school by promoting eco-friendly practices. These practices include improving energy efficiency, reducing waste, reducing water use, conserving habitat, responsible resource management, proper disposal techniques, reducing stormwater runoff, improving water or air quality, incorporating sustainability practices on the campus, such as assisting with school gardens, mulching, or promoting native/Florida-friendly drought tolerant plants. He consistently goes above and beyond in his role as Head Custodian, ensuring that the campus remains clean, safe and welcoming for both students and staff. His strong work ethics, sharp attention to detail, and generous spirit are evident in everything he does.

### **Carmen Madrigal Mora Central Park Elementary School**

Carmen Mrs. Madrigal Mora plays an essential and deeply valued role in supporting Central Park Elementary's environmental efforts. Her behind-the-scenes dedication helps ensure that initiatives like the Everglades Student Ambassadors run smoothly. Each week, she makes sure that all necessary equipment is available and ready for the club's early morning meetings. She also stays after hours to support campus clean-up events and tree plantings, making it possible for students, volunteers, and community partners to participate, even outside of regular school hours. Her efforts extend to protecting the school garden areas, as she works with the maintenance crews to ensure these spaces are not disturbed. These garden areas are not only beautiful but serve as hands-on learning environments for students. Her watchful and caring nature is also seen in the way she checks in on students throughout the day, making sure they are safe and enjoying school. In addition to her daily responsibilities, she often stays late to help prepare the school for Family Science



Nights and other special events. A true role model for sustainability, she consistently promotes ecofriendly habits such as turning off lights in unused rooms to preserve energy—which helped the school win the “How Low Can You Go?” energy conservation challenge. Her contributions reflect a deep commitment to both environmental stewardship and student well-being, making her an invaluable part of the school community.

## **Yadre Pinzon**

### **New River Middle School**



Ms. Yadre Pinzon, Head of Facilities at New River Middle School, is nominated for the 2025 P3 Eco Challenge Custodial Stewardship Award. With six years of dedicated service, including three as Head of Facilities, Ms. Pinzon ensures the campus is pristine and beautiful, fostering a positive environment for students and staff. She has implemented a comprehensive recycling program and organized campus-wide clean-up events, significantly reducing the school's waste footprint. Ms. Pinzon actively supports the Eco-Sharks Club, mentoring students on the importance of campus beautification and sustainability. Her efforts have made a lasting impact, instilling a sense of responsibility and environmental stewardship in students. Ms. Pinzon's commitment to maintaining a clean, sustainable school environment and her dedication to educating and inspiring students make her an exemplary candidate for this award.

## **John Rachel**

### **Lauderdale Lakes Middle School**

Mr. John Rachel is the Facilities Serviceperson and Grounds Maintenance personnel at Lauderdale Lakes Middle School. He is a Veteran and an elder in his church. He has been working at Lauderdale Lakes for the past 23 years. He maintains the cleanliness, orderliness, and safety of the buildings and grounds. His tasks are extensive: mowing, landscaping, and repairs, while also ensuring adherence to safety protocols. He assists with the cleanliness and upkeep of the Food Forest by mowing the outskirts, providing valuable advice, and assisting in all areas that we ask of him. He is extremely hardworking and a dedicated team player. Additionally, students who may want to skip classes by going into the Food Forest, he encourages them to get back to classes. He assists in getting the power washer used to clean the bricks surrounding the Food Forest. Mr. Rachel is skilled in fixing all equipment including the lawn mower, broken cabinets and desks. He is responsible for cleaning various areas including the cafeteria and restrooms. He is an expert in using cleaning equipment. He is always on time and has excellent work ethics. He works well with staff and students, assisting others as needed. He is pleasant and creates a positive working environment. Without his efforts it would be a struggle working in the Food Forest, his diligence is unmatched.



## **Audrey Turner** **Silver Trail Middle School**

Audrey Turner, affectionately known as Sabrina, has been a cornerstone of Silver Trail Middle School since its grand opening in 1996. Her dedication to ensuring the school is prepared for the best work environment possible is evident from the early morning hours when she opens the building, making sure it is safe and secure for the learning environment. Throughout the day, Sabrina diligently checks that windows and doors are secure, and the building is free from debris. Her commitment extends to the school grounds, where she ensures the lawns are manicured, trees are trimmed, and grass edging is detailed. Sabrina's versatility is unmatched; she can fix anything from plumbing and electrical issues to carpentry and painting. Her remarkable ability to move furniture and heavy file cabinets during the yearly school cleaning is always impressive. Sabrina is not only a skilled custodian but also an excellent facilitator and teacher in her field, treating her staff with respect and fostering a positive work environment.



## **Aaron Wright** **Beachside Montessori Village**

Aaron Wright, Head Custodian at Beachside Montessori Village, is the heart behind many of our school's most successful environmental and sustainability efforts. Known for his reliability, warmth, and can-do spirit, Mr. Aaron goes above and beyond to support our green initiatives. Whether it's troubleshooting hydroponic systems, setting up and storing equipment for our embryonic studies, or assembling outdoor learning spaces, he tackles every task with care and a smile. He works closely with staff, district personnel, and his custodial team to ensure our outdoor learning labs are safe, functional, and ready for students to engage with nature. His thoughtful attention to detail—like pausing district work to avoid disrupting student garden projects—shows his deep respect for the learning happening all around him. Mr. Aaron's behind-the-scenes dedication makes him an irreplaceable part of our school village and a true steward of our shared commitment to sustainability.



## **NON-INSTRUCTIONAL NOMINEES**

### **Christopher Austin** **Park Springs Elementary School**

Mr. Austin is the school safety monitor... but also an environmental steward. Mr. Austin not only keeps the school safe but helped with the environmental club and creating our Kinder "garden. He spent hours watching how the sun hits in different locations at our school and where the sprinklers come on. He also walked the campus to find all of the water locations that we can use at our school. He also spent hours with us seeing which locations are also shown on different camera views as we can see any animals in our garden or monitor any unwanted visitors. After all of his research, he gave the staff different locations that he felt were best for our garden



based on the sun, water and camera view. He checks the garden daily and gives reports of anything suspicious or exciting. While walking around the campus he will pick up trash and remind students to pick up their trash. He also finds ways that can prevent trash pile ups and works with environmental club to come up with some campus beautification ideas. The students love seeing him in the hallways to talk about the garden and he comes out to the students while they are working to make sure everyone is safe and check on the progress.

## **Timothy Marcus** **Ramblewood Elementary School**



Mr. Timothy Marcus is a former student of Ramblewood Elementary. He attended the school from Kindergarten to Fifth grade. Now, we have the pleasure of having him as a parent. He teaches his children about environmental issues and the importance of protecting the planet. His children have been involved with planting from a very young age and the family is always looking for new sustainable practices to adapt and pass on to future generations. These practices have been shared by Mr. Marcus to his friends and neighbors. He organized neighborhood park cleanups and helps with beach cleanups too. Last year, he participated and recruited some parents for a cleaning day sponsored by Home Depot at our own Ramblewood Elementary. He volunteers as a beekeeper at Mason's Killer Honey. This year, he is coming to our school to share about Bee Awareness Day to first and fourth grade classes. In addition, he also volunteers for the Safety Town: "canal and snake/bugs safety in Florida." Mr. and Mrs. Marcus taught kindergarteners about poisonous bugs, poisonous snakes, and alligators. We are very fortunate to have such an enthusiastic and involved dad in our school. From teaching a class, to providing materials, and to building raised gardening beds last year. This year, he sponsored a bucket garden at our school. He taught the children about the importance of growing your own food. He is an active member of the Coral Springs community. He plays hockey and coaches basketball. He is the head of a basketball league

## **Elena Ninotti** **New River Middle School**

Ms. Ninotti is a dedicated parent and active member of the School Advisory Council (SAC) and New River Friends (PTSA). Her unwavering commitment to volunteering and her involvement in various school activities, including Honor Roll Celebrations, field trips, and the Eco-Sharks club, make her an invaluable asset to our school community. Ms. Mariani's passion for environmental education and sustainability is evident through her leadership and support in fostering a better learning environment for all students. Ms. Mariani fosters awareness of both the natural and built environments through her active participation in the Eco-Sharks club. She promotes understanding of environmental concepts, issues, and values, encouraging students to develop positive attitudes and perceptions towards sustainability. Her advocacy for civic responsibility is demonstrated by her efforts to engage others in problem-solving and action based on their knowledge and skills. Ms. Mariani helps educators utilize outdoor and alternative sites for environmental stewardship practices, ensuring that eco-friendly materials are used in all activities. She encourages lifelong skills that enable students and staff to prevent and address environmental issues effectively.



## **Tammy Melton** **Central Park Elementary School**



Mrs. Tammy Melton, the Office Manager at Central Park Elementary, is the quiet force powering many of the school's most successful environmental initiatives. Her tireless behind-the-scenes efforts have been instrumental in maintaining the school's commitment to sustainability. She streamlines the entire grant process—from ensuring proper submission and vendor coordination to managing inventory and payments—allowing green projects to flourish without administrative setbacks. Her precision has ensured flawless audits and maximized every opportunity for the school to secure eco-friendly resources. Mrs. Melton goes beyond logistics; she inspires and empowers staff to seek out grants, encourages energy conservation across campus which helped the school win the “How Low Can You Go?” Challenge. A creative visionary, she developed the idea of Everglades-themed student agenda and folder covers, offering students daily exposure to environmental content. She further brought that idea to life by encouraging a teacher to lead the design, blending school pride with environmental awareness. Whether coordinating the Everglades Mural unveiling event, researching native plant vendors, or advising on best practices for school gardens, Mrs. Melton continually advances CPE's green goals with thoughtful leadership, collaboration, and passion.

## **Aalyiah Mohammed** **Miramar High School**

Aalyiah E. Mohammed is a proud alumna of Miramar High School, where she graduated in 2020. As a



dedicated student-athlete, she maintained an impressive 4.2 GPA while excelling in her sports. Currently, Aalyiah works at Miramar High School as a Teacher Assistant in the ESE department, where she provides essential support to students with exceptional needs, ensuring they receive personalized guidance and encouragement. Aalyiah also partakes in being in the school's Environmental Club with the children in the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) department. Every "Red Day" during 2nd period, Aalyiah and these dedicated students take on the important task of collecting recycling throughout the campus. Their efforts not only help to keep the school environment clean and sustainable but also instill a sense of responsibility and teamwork. By participating in this initiative, the children learn valuable lessons about the environment and the impact of their actions on the planet. Their commitment to

recycling is a shining example of how small actions can lead to significant positive changes in the community. She extends her impact beyond academics, as she is the Co-Sponsor for the Health Information Project (HIP), where she helps promote health education and awareness among students. Her dedication to fostering a healthy and supportive school environment is a testament to her commitment to student well-being. In addition to her roles, Aalyiah thrives as both the Head Coach of the Miramar High Girls Volleyball Team and The Miramar High Girls Flag Football Team Assistant Coach, guiding athletes to develop their skills, teamwork, and leadership qualities. She instills discipline, sportsmanship, and perseverance in her teams, shaping them for success in both competition and life. Balancing education, sports, environmental awareness, and health advocacy, Aalyiah continues to inspire and support students in every aspect of their development. She remains committed to evolving as an educator, mentor, coach, and advocate—leaving a legacy in both the classroom and the athletic arena.

## **Geeta Persaud Floranada Elementary School**

Geeta is a very dedicated person to have on campus. Geeta is our school Campus monitor here for the past four years and always willing to help or jump into any way she can assist. Geeta loves the nature connection and the tranquility it brings her to see and help the students and her school. Geeta has a great knowledge about plants and the environment, and she loves to share that with the students also. Geeta is a coach alongside the Science Teacher for Earth Day Everyday Kids Club. They meet every Monday with students and plant and water their gardens together. They recently planted native trees in front of the school. They expanded the butterfly garden and outdoor learning space.



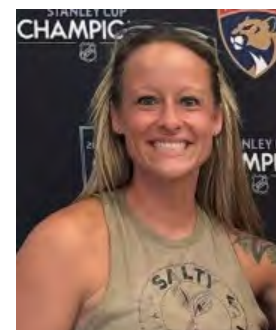
## **Noah Siegel Collins Elementary School**



Noah fosters awareness of the natural and built environments through his garden maintenance work at the school and by hosting field trips to the Dania Patch. These activities directly expose students to natural environments and help them understand how built environments (like school gardens) can support natural ecosystems. By teaching students how to plant salad seeds and when to harvest them, Noah is promoting understanding of food systems, plant growth cycles, and sustainable agriculture. His garden work helps students develop values around food production and environmental stewardship. Noah exemplifies civic responsibility through his volunteer work. By organizing the Florida Crunch event and installing an automatic irrigation system, he demonstrates practical problem-solving and encourages students to take action in their environment. Noah directly supports educators by maintaining the school garden as a viable learning space and by offering the Dania Patch as an alternative field trip site. He provides methods (planting, harvesting) that educators can incorporate into their environmental education. While not explicitly stated, Noah's focus on gardening, sustainable agriculture, and irrigation efficiency suggests an eco-friendly approach. His work with natural plant growth and teaching about insects indicates a preference for eco-friendly methods over chemical alternatives. Noah's comprehensive volunteer work demonstrates excellence across all environmental stewardship criteria, making him truly "extraordinary and exceptional" as described.

## **Lisa Smith Ramblewood Elementary School**

Lisa Smith has been heading Ramblewood Elementary's PTO for the last 5 years. Her PTO team does an amazing job at creating fun and engaging events for the students. These events raise money for student field trips, teacher lunches and our food forest. She is a huge supporter of all extracurricular activities. She comes out on weekends to help maintain the garden. She's usually accompanied by her two boys who also participate in the garden cleaning/maintenance. She also helped start a butterfly garden by donating plants and her time setting up said garden. In addition to volunteering her time in the garden, Lisa has set funds (\$250) aside from PTO to support the garden. The funds have been used to purchase plants, soil, mulch, and gardening equipment. Mrs. Smith's ongoing support both financially and physically are a major reason why Ramblewood's garden is in existence.



## **EDUCATOR NOMINEES**

### **Elementary School Educators**

#### **Marie Berlingeri** **Central Park Elementary School**



Mrs. Marie Berlingeri is an exemplary educator who has shown unwavering commitment to fostering environmental awareness and action within her school community. As the co-sponsor of the Everglades Student Ambassador program, she has expanded the initiative to include students from grades 2-5, growing the program to 60 ambassadors. Her leadership has enabled students to engage in meaningful hands-on activities such as campus clean-ups, garden renovations, and pollinator area projects, all while promoting teamwork and environmental stewardship. Mrs. Berlingeri also encourages lifelong environmental habits by leading beach clean-ups and integrating Everglades Literacy lessons into her 5th-grade curriculum, providing students with valuable insights into local ecosystems and conservation. Beyond her work with students, Mrs. Berlingeri actively participates in professional development opportunities, including Everglades Literacy training, and advocates for her colleagues to do the same. This dedication has helped the school earn additional points for its Everglades Champion School application. Mrs. Berlingeri is a creative educator who seamlessly integrates environmental issues into her lessons, promoting critical thinking and problem-solving among her students. Her efforts extend beyond the classroom, forging strong connections between the school, community, and environment. Through her leadership, she continues to inspire others to take responsibility for the planet, preparing her students to be future environmental advocates.

#### **Erika Gurk** **Sandpiper Elementary School**

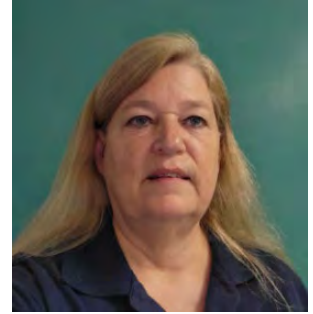
Ms. Gurk started working for Sandpiper Elementary 4 years ago as a Kindergarten teacher. After 2 years in kindergarten, she moved up to take over the high-achieving first grade class. Aside from teaching during the day, Ms. Gurk teaches a STEM class for Sandpiper's aftercare students. As a life skills/ science project she created a small garden with her students. Soon after, in addition to teaching, she started plans for a sustainable vegetable/herb garden. She worked with another colleague in creating a school friendly look that would bring color and life to the school. This year, kids have stepped up in taking care of the garden through her supervision and have learned life skills, responsibility, cooperation and how they can better help the environment. Students learn about plant growth and how to care for the plants.



Teachers at the school look forward to emails about the fresh vegetables, mints and herbs that grow. In her 4 years at the school, she has left a lasting impact that brings life, color and ownership to students at the school. Over the last 2 years, she has dedicated hundreds of hours of her free time to beautify the school. While most of that time was spent planning and building gardens throughout the schools outside campus, numerous hours have been spent researching grants to help obtain materials and plants for the Title 1 school. She leads not only her class, but many others from Pre-K to fifth grade, in getting hands-on and dirty while planting and maintaining the multiple gardens. She has been working with the City of Sunrise to have their nature team along with people from Broward County and the school district come out to teach the students the importance of various native and pollinating plants and has become a NatureScape certified garden.

## **Penelope Reinman** **Nob Hill Elementary School**

Penelope Reinman has been a teacher at Nob Hill Elementary since 2005. During these years, she has worked in all levels of their InD self-contained classes, 4th and 2nd general education and Pre-K classes. She currently teaches 4th and 5th grade students with Intellectual Disabilities. In the past 5 years, she has worked with administration to create a butterfly garden in the school's bus loop and in the front car loop. The students in her class have helped plant, water and trim the plants. Ms. Reinman has taken over the school's vegetable garden and with the help of her students, have added soil and planted various vegetables. They hope that they are able to try some of the vegetable that the iguanas have left for them.



## **Philip Schulte** **Pompano Beach Elementary School**



Mr. Philip Schulte has been in early childhood education for more than 30 years. Every year that he teaches, he is sure to introduce gardening, growing, and producing food to the children. He has been fortunate to have a supportive staff that allows him to concoct some very unusual gardens. Along with the gardens, comes a variety of features like water sources, fountains, renewable energy, and child produced pots and decorations. When he was the president of the PTA, their cities namesake was celebrating their 100th year anniversary. For that celebration, he had 100 juvenile trees that were native to Florida donated. The children at the school along with some staff planted those 100 trees. Now, they provide necessary shade along the PE fields and are a beautiful and resourceful addition to our school.

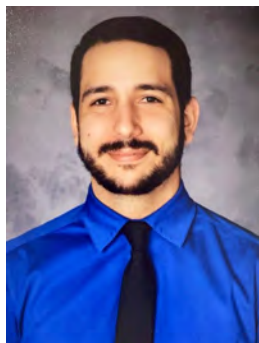
## **Maritza Suarez** **Silver Palms Elementary School**

Ms. Suarez is a dedicated 4th grade teacher at Silver Palms Elementary, where she has been teaching for over 20 years. As a certified National Habitat Steward, she is passionate about raising environmental awareness through both classroom instruction and extracurricular clubs. When the school's butterfly garden was left neglected, Ms. Suarez took the initiative by involving her students in a hands-on restoration project. Applying what they learned in class, her students revitalized the garden, successfully attracting butterflies and providing a living example of the insect's life cycle for the entire school community to admire. Beyond the classroom, Ms. Suarez sponsors several student clubs including VEX Robotics, Sea Perch, SECME, Minecraft, and SAVE Promise. She engages students through diverse teaching strategies—often incorporating outdoor learning and real-world environmental issues—to inspire them to take action and make a difference.



## Middle School Educators

### Yitzchok (Isaac) Ben-ezri Sawgrass Springs Middle School



Isaac Ben-ezri is an 8<sup>th</sup> grade physical science teacher with a passion for sports and nature. He has been teaching the environmental program at Sawgrass Springs Middle School for the last three years. While teaching students about Florida and how to take care of our environment and school using PBL and labs in class, Mr. Ben-ezri makes sure to give the students as many educational experiences and field trips as he can. Some examples of the fieldtrips are 3 days at Seacamp, Youth Climate Summit, Jungle Island, Shark Tagging, and going to the Nature Center next door to our school. Class is outside at least twice a week, keeping our plants around campus healthy and taking care of our Food Forest.

### Grisel Berrios New River Middle School



Grisel Berrios is an amazing asset to the iCAN (Integrated Career and Academic Networks) Magnet Program at New River Middle School for the past three years. Students in her 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> grade STEM Engineering classes thrive in the hands-on structure of her classes. Her enthusiasm and dedication to her students, the local environment, and the greater school community is evident when you see her out in the school garden with her kids. Mrs. Berrios not only raises awareness of the natural and built environments but also creates strong connections between the environment, the school, and the broader community for her students. Mrs. Berrios is deeply invested in providing instructionally sound activities that foster creativity in her students both inside and outside the classroom. She employs a variety of instructional techniques that create an engaging and effective learning environment, tailoring her approach to accommodate different learning styles. By utilizing community resources and making real-life connections, she motivates her students to see the relevance of their learning beyond the classroom. Her impact extends far beyond the classroom, as she cultivates a deep sense of environmental stewardship and social responsibility in her students. She utilizes the outdoors and/or alternative sites in his/her environmental stewardship practices. Her *Eco-Sharks* Club members do not just spend time working outside in the school garden. Eco-Sharks Club students and STEM Engineering students get opportunities to go into the field at various locations throughout Broward County.

### Banesha Fenster Nova Middle School



Banesha Fenster would like to expand the green space to create a bigger garden box(es). She has taught at Nova Middle School for about 15 years, and she incorporates healthy eating, climate, and geography into her lessons to encourage student engagement in the love of healthy eating.

## **Diane Paillet**

### **Crystal Lake Middle School**



Diane Paillet is a grade 6-8 science teacher (including HS Physical Science), Food Forest (garden) Elective teacher, Cross-Country Coach, and Science Department Chair. She has been at Crystal Lake Middle School in Pompano Beach for just shy of 12 years. She also teaches the GEARS1 and GEARS2 accelerated science program in the Pre-Engineering Magnet and focuses her curriculum on project-based learning. She does this while combining her love of nature and the importance of sustainability. Using recycled and reused materials in her classroom are essential components of her projects. Additionally, she welcomes the SEED Program from Heal the Planet into her classroom weekly to reinforce these topics with her garden students.

## **High School Educator**

### **Dae'Ja Crossman**

#### **Miramar High School**

**Dae'Ja Crossman**, is in her first year as a Marine Science teacher at Miramar High School. It has been a year filled with exploration, learning, and the opportunity to inspire young minds. From day one, she set out to create a classroom environment where curiosity thrives, where her students see the ocean not just as a vast body of water, but as a world teeming with life, mystery, and endless possibilities. One of the highlights of her year was attending the Guy Harvey Conservation Education Training at Manatee Lagoon, where she immersed herself in innovative ways to teach students about marine life, from the intricate behaviors of fish to the ecological importance of sharks and lionfish. This experience allowed her to bring hands-on, engaging lessons back to her classroom, sparking excitement and deeper understanding among her students. Beyond the classroom, she was proud to coordinate a presentation with the Cortada Foundation at Miramar High School, where her students had the chance to learn about the critical issues of climate change, sea level rise, and human impact on our planet. This event was more than just a lesson—it was a call to action, showing her students that they have the power to shape the future of our environment. Watching their awareness grow and their passion ignite reaffirmed why she chose this path in the first place. Reflecting on this year, she can confidently say that teaching has empowered her to be the change she wants to see in the world. She has realized that education isn't just about delivering content—it's about inspiring action, fostering curiosity, and making science come alive. As she moves forward in her career, she will continue to be a positive role model, showing her students that science is the key to the future and that their voices and actions matter in shaping a better world.



## SCHOOL NOMINEES

### Beachside Montessori Village – All Categories



Beachside Montessori Village is the first and only public PreK-8 Montessori school in Broward County, Florida, the sixth-largest school district in the country. As a truly one-of-a-kind institution, our award-winning school has earned numerous accolades, including the Magnet Schools of America School of Excellence Award, the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School Award, and recognition as an Everglades Champion School. These honors reflect our unwavering commitment to excellence in education and environmental stewardship. Environmental responsibility is central to our educational approach, integrating eco-friendly practices and outdoor learning at all levels. Our 133-member Garden Club, supported by teachers and parent volunteers, fosters sustainability through hands-on gardening in our certified wildlife habitat, native plant garden, and hydroponic station with solar-powered timers. This connection with nature deepens students' understanding of renewable energy and eco-conscious living while developing the whole child, a Montessori core value. Embracing Montessori's practical life philosophy, we cultivate essential skills like food preparation and social interaction while reinforcing the interconnectedness of all life. The restoration of our labyrinth with native plants, and student-driven care, further immerses students in nature, incorporating weekly mindfulness walks and the option to use the labyrinth after school as our outdoor areas open to the public after hours. Our commitment to sustainability extends to a student-run recycling program, where students independently manage collections from start to finish. This not only fosters environmental stewardship, but models care of the environment through accountability and leadership. Through these initiatives and our dedication to environmental education, Beachside provides a learning environment where students not only thrive academically but also become responsible, environmentally-conscious citizens ready to make a positive impact on the world.



### Central Park Elementary School – Categories 2 & 3



Central Park Elementary proudly stands as the Everglades Champion School, a title it has upheld for six consecutive years as the first K-5 school in Broward County to earn this distinction. This prestigious recognition, awarded by the Everglades Foundation, celebrates schools that excel in Everglades Literacy and environmental stewardship. This year, CPE received the Everglades Champion School Milestone Award for its unwavering commitment to weaving Everglades education into its curriculum through interdisciplinary projects and immersive field experiences that spark students' curiosity and foster a deep connection to the local ecosystem. Beyond academics, CPE's dedication to sustainability shines through its beloved school garden and daily activities that encourage students to embrace their roles as environmental stewards. The

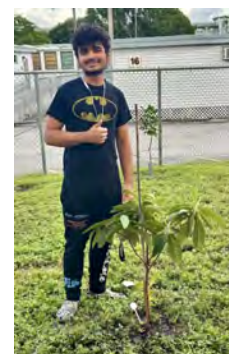
Everglades Student Ambassadors, recognized last year by the Everglades Foundation for their impactful work, lead the charge in promoting sustainable practices, energy conservation, and peer education about preserving the fragile Everglades. In a standout accomplishment this year, Central Park Elementary earned 1st place in the 12th Annual Miami HEAT "How Low Can You Go" Challenge among 55 schools, achieving the highest percentage energy reduction and greatest kilowatt-hour (kWh) savings. The school slashed energy use by 35% from its 2024/2025 baseline, saving 187,904 kWh and \$18,790 in costs. CPE also emphasizes community involvement, with students and faculty regularly participating in beach cleanups, Water Matters Day events, and mangrove nursery projects. From kindergarten, students engage in campus cleanups and garden care, instilling a sense of civic duty and environmental responsibility. Through its relentless commitment to education, sustainability, and community, Central Park Elementary cultivates a generation of leaders poised to protect the Everglades and beyond.



### Coconut Creek High School – All Categories



Coconut Creek High School, established in 1973, is a dynamic educational institution in Florida known for its academic excellence, diverse student body, and comprehensive programs. The school offers specialized opportunities such as the Technical Magnet Program, which focuses on STEM fields, and the AICE (Advanced International Certificate of Education) Diploma Track program, providing rigorous, internationally recognized coursework. With a diverse student population, Coconut Creek



High fosters an inclusive environment where students engage in a broad array of Cambridge, honors, and dual enrollment courses, preparing them for success in college and beyond. The school also emphasizes extracurricular involvement, offering various athletic, artistic, and community service opportunities, making it a well-rounded hub for academic and personal growth.

### Cooper City Elementary School – Category 1



Cooper City Elementary School is a public school located in Cooper City, FL, situated in a large suburban setting. The school serves a diverse student population of 735 students from Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade. Cooper City Elementary is proud of its academic achievements. Our school has embarked on an exciting journey to enhance our campus through the creation of a vibrant school garden. This garden features a variety of plants, including pineapple trees, aloe plants, pollinators, herbs,

and vegetables. The garden not only beautifies our school but also serves as a hands-on learning environment for our students. We are grateful for the support we have received from the community and various organizations. We also received a DonorsChoose.org grant that provided shovels, seeds, fertilizer, and pots. The Florida Farmers Bureau generously



donated \$200, which helped us kickstart our garden project. Additionally, the Green Advisory Board has been instrumental in our success, donating both plants and their time to help us beautify our school grounds. The Broward County Schools STEM department have spearheaded and volunteered time and materials to beautify our school gardens. We have also had assistance from the NatureScape Broward Education Specialist by volunteering time and education. The Cooper City Elementary Garden Club has provided students with invaluable opportunities to learn about sustainability and the importance of caring for our environment. Through this initiative, students gain practical knowledge and develop a sense of responsibility towards nature. We are excited about the continued growth of our garden and the positive impact it has on our students and community.

## **Coral Park Elementary School – Categories 1 & 3**



At Coral Park Elementary, environmental education is at the heart of student learning. Our Green Thumb Gardening and Environmental Club has more than doubled in size, now involving 40 passionate student members dedicated to sustainability and hands-on eco-learning. This year, students designed and expanded our raised bed gardens, planted a variety of vegetables and herbs, and launched new container gardens across campus. They also began creating a student-led Food Forest featuring fruit trees and native plants to support biodiversity. Environmental learning extends across all grade levels

and subjects. From PreK to 5th grade, students participate in interdisciplinary activities tied to real-world ecological topics like pollinators, plant and animal adaptations, invasive species, and Everglades conservation. Our weekly gardening sessions and campus-wide habitat projects—like beautification days and native plant installations—encourage community involvement and student ownership of our green spaces. Through initiatives like the Dream in Green Schools Challenge, Fairchild Garden contests, and Everglades Ambassador activities, students lead efforts in sustainability, conservation education, and environmental awareness.



With the support of our teachers and community partners, Coral Park Elementary is proud to be a National Wildlife Federation Certified Schoolyard Habitat and a Silver-level Everglades Champion School—striving for gold.

## **Dave Thomas Education Center West – Category 1**

The purpose of this project is to teach, motivate and practice gardening here at Dave Thomas Education Center (DTEC). It is the vision of our principal, to graduate our students with life skills, so they can enter the job force after high school. DTEC is a public, alternative school for students who have not achieved success in standard middle and high school. The school has about 478 students who are overaged, short on credits, and/or low GPA from seventh grade through twelve grades. The demographics of the school are as follows: 70% Black, 20% Hispanic and 26% White. Over 86% of our school's students receive free or reduced lunch due to economic hardship. The faculty and staff here at Dave Thomas Education Center, want to uphold the vision of Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's restaurants to provides our students with life skills that makes them employable.



## Davie Elementary School – Category 1

At Davie Elementary, the Green Team has made significant progress in transforming the school grounds into a more sustainable and eco-friendlier environment as part of the P3 EcoChallenge. The school year



began with a dedicated effort to clean, weed, and remove invasive plants from the existing garden space, setting the stage for a revitalized outdoor learning area. The Green Team's mission focused on two main objectives: enhancing the garden with pollinator-friendly plants and establishing a sustainable edible garden that students could maintain and learn from throughout the year. Pollinator plants, including marigolds and pentas, were strategically chosen to attract butterflies, bees, and other beneficial pollinators, which are crucial to a healthy ecosystem. These vibrant flowers not only

beautify the campus but also foster environmental awareness among students. The butterfly plants provided an exciting visual of the butterfly life cycle, allowing students to observe caterpillars, pupas, and butterflies in real-time. Alongside the pollinator garden, the Green Team planted edible crops such as dill, mint, basil, rosemary, green peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, radishes, mesclun lettuce, and spinach. The students also explored the difference between fruits and vegetables. Despite challenges with a large iguana population that feasted on the garden, including the tops of the marigolds, the tomato plants continue to thrive and produce fruit. This served as a valuable lesson in pollination, as students observed bees buzzing between plants. Through these initiatives, Davie Elementary has fostered a strong culture of sustainability, environmental responsibility, and community involvement.



## Driftwood Middle School – Category 3



Driftwood Middle School (DMS) continues to expand its commitment to using our campus as a dynamic, outdoor learning environment integrated across multiple content areas. Currently, 75% of our school grounds are dedicated to ecologically beneficial purposes. DMS holds certifications from Broward County Naturescape, the National Wildlife Federation, and the North American Butterfly Association. We are proud to be the first school in Broward County Public Schools recognized as a Florida GOLD Apple School, a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School, and a recipient of the National Wildlife Federation's Eco-Schools Green Flag Award. Our school has twice been honored with the overall P3 Eco-Challenge award, along with recognition in numerous sustainability categories.

We are privileged to have a nationally recognized birdwatcher on staff, who has identified 75 bird species on our grounds. Our students also benefit from engaging presentations by environmental experts. Environmentalist Victor Suarez has played a key role in tree planting within our ROPES course, while Cindi Griffin has been instrumental in developing and maintaining our thriving Food Forest. DMS's campus includes a Butterfly Garden, Food Forest, native Hammock areas, a Hydroponic Tower Garden, protected Owl Habitats, Native Species Habitats, Raised Garden Beds, a ROPES course, and a Solar Station. These thoughtfully designed outdoor spaces feature seating areas that promote outdoor learning and student collaboration. By spending time outdoors, students benefit from fresh air and sunlight, which contribute positively to their health and well-being. These spaces are regularly used for both environmental education and team-building exercises. Science classes engage students in topics such



as environmental studies, weather patterns, birdwatching, ecosystems, conservation, the water cycle, plant reproduction, and solar energy—making our campus a living classroom.

## Floranada Elementary School – Categories 1 & 4



Floranada is committed to teaching students to connect nature and the Everglades (our backyard) and learning at school. The outside areas of the school are there for all to use, not just the Science teacher. They are encouraged to explore different ways to use the space to get the kids out of the classroom, but still learn in a structured and safe environment. Areas of the school grounds and/or nearby community are managed to enhance ecological integrity that has been diminished by human activity. The students revamping the butterfly garden. The students also participated in a beach cleanup and dune restoration connecting to our environment. Fifth grade Students regularly work on successful collaboration and partnership building skills by working with pre-k on environmental issues. Third grade students worked with the Youth Education Alliance (YEA) and did a beach clean-up and a dune restoration in Ft. Lauderdale. Students worked with Broward Naturescape to plant native trees. Students attended a presentation from Guy Harvey Dolphinfish research. The UF/IFAS doing a program at the school for grades K-2.



## Griffin Elementary School – All Categories

Although we have been striving for a more sustainable campus for over a decade, there are always ways to improve our campus' sustainability. It is a welcome challenge. We are always reviewing and tweaking our procedures; yet our campus culture remains the same: reduce, reuse, recycle, rethink. Griffin has had an environmental club for 4th and 5th grade students for 17 years, called Eco Patrol. Our mission is to create a more sustainable campus, while educating our peers, parents, and community on the importance of promoting and living as good environmental stewards. September, we kicked off our 17th year of school wide recycling of all paper, plastics, cans, and bottles. Our main goal remains to be the reduction of recycling contamination; however next year we will be working on REDUCTION. Our mantra remains "if in doubt, throw it out". In 2021 we were awarded a district grant for a Food Forest, to complement our existing Food Forest. After input from our parents, staff, and students we agreed on a design for our new Food Forest. The letter G. In November of 2021, students, volunteers, and staff converged to get busy laying down bricks, hauling mulch and soil. It has been a terrific addition to our already thriving vegetable and butterfly gardens. Our cherry tomatoes are always a hit with the students. Last year during our STEM family night, we gave tours of our new Food Forest and had a huge sampling of garden produce with parents and their children. We are now able to provide "garden to café" produce. Our Food Rescue program is still going strong. We have the collaborative efforts of our ESPs to thank for making it successful. Last year alone over 400 pounds of uneaten/unopened food had been diverted from landfills and donated to those in need. Our artificial burrows



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on campus house our growing burrowing owl population. Our school newsletter features a section on “sustainability” where we keep our parents informed of all the initiatives and happenings. You can also find a “sustainability” link on our website under “quick links.” During Water Matters Day each year our Eco Patrol students interact with the community teaching them the importance of reducing our plastics to keep our water clean and our wildlife safe. This year was the first year we did not have a booth, but we did show up to accept our first ever Broward NatureScape Emerald Award. It was an exciting day! From our administration, custodial staff, teachers, staff, and students all support our sustainability initiatives, which is why we are successful. In summary, sustainability is an organic and fluid concept, where we are always introducing new ways and revamping old ways to reduce our school’s carbon footprint.



## Miramar High School – Category 5



Miramar High School offers a wide variety of course offerings and special programs. Our course offerings allow each student to complete a high school program designed around the student’s needs and interests. Whether you are a member of the International Baccalaureate Program, Aviation Program, or a member of one of our 15 career and technical programs, Miramar High School offers a wide variety of courses for all interests. We currently offer 22 dual enrollment classes on our campus through Embry Riddle University and Florida International University! All students are provided engaging educational opportunities through a rigorous curriculum, innovative technology, and involvement in our diverse

community. We strive to produce responsible citizens who contribute to the present and excel in the future. From all our diversity, we are lucky to have a plethora of ideas of ways to inform our students of environmental initiatives. Whether its Environmental Science Honors, AP (Advanced Placement) Environmental Science, Dual Enrollment Environmental Science, or our International Baccalaureate Environmental Systems and Societies courses offered, students can understand our impact on the Earth. And in case students want to further expand their passion to learn and help mitigate environmental issues, students can join the Environmental Club. Our Environmental Club established MHS, a Green Flag School. The Environmental Club, along with the ESE department, implemented a Recycling Program. This year, the club created an aquaponic system in the classroom and shared what they learned with the public at Water Matters Day. They also won Honorable Mention for the Emerald Award by adding more native plants to our butterfly garden and food forest. The school applied for a grant to further educate our students on agriculture, pollinators, and gardening. We intend on using the garden as a diverse way to have students learn important concepts like soil quality including pH and macronutrients, irrigation methods, and crop rotation outside of the classroom. We are one of the schools in Broward County accepted into the Tea Garden Program, where students will learn how to sustainably grow edible food together in their neighborhood. In the month of April 2025, the club plans to finish building a greenhouse and vertical garden. We are working on the USDA Farmers Grant in which the school will use funds to offer further support for the garden and great an outdoor sink.



## New River Middle School – All Categories

Located at 3100 Riverland Road, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33312, New River Middle School is dedicated to fostering sustainability through various innovative programs. The school integrates environmental education into its curriculum with marine classes that explore local ecosystems and estuarine and ocean conservation. Students actively participate in hands-on learning, including field trips to nearby coastal habitats, which deepen their understanding of a variety of connected topics related to marine biodiversity, resource conservation, and environmentally conscious practices. New River Middle School also supports sustainability through the *Eco-Sharks Environmental Club*, which encourages students to promote eco-friendly practices like recycling and tree planting. Additionally, the school is engaged in several Broward County Schools environmental initiatives, including the *Youth Climate Summit*, the *P3 Eco Challenge*, and the *School Growing Spaces PLC*, which focuses on creating green spaces and hands-on gardening projects. The *Mission Possible PBL (Project-Based Learning) Event* is another highlight, where students and teachers showcase environmental projects to the greater community. This annual event emphasizes cross-disciplinary collaboration, between all core subject areas and our tremendous iCAN (Integrated Career and Academic Networks) elective classes, to address real-world sustainability issues, from energy-efficient designs to public awareness campaigns. New River Middle School continues to inspire students to become responsible stewards of the environment, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to create a sustainable future.



including the *Youth Climate Summit*, the *P3 Eco Challenge*, and the *School Growing Spaces PLC*, which focuses on creating green spaces and hands-on gardening projects. The *Mission Possible PBL (Project-Based Learning) Event* is another highlight, where students and teachers showcase environmental projects to the greater community. This annual event emphasizes cross-disciplinary collaboration, between all core subject areas and our tremendous iCAN (Integrated Career and Academic Networks) elective classes, to address real-world sustainability issues, from energy-efficient designs to public awareness campaigns. New River Middle School continues to inspire students to become responsible stewards of the environment, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to create a sustainable future.

## Nob Hill Elementary School– Category 1



Nob Hill Elementary continues to teach their students about the natural world while creating new native habitats on their campus. Students help maintain multiple gardens on campus including butterfly, vegetable, native plant, and flower gardens. In these areas, students are learning science, math, and observation skills. These planting areas are outdoor classrooms for watching wildlife and honing our senses and monitoring plant growth. Students continue to take part in citizen science on campus. Students measure trees with the Global Tree Project and observe and record data on pollinators with the Great Sunflower Project. Students help maintain these gardens by planting, weeding, and watering. Our students also help keep our campus clean. Students continue to participate in a regular trash pickup game called Trash Nijas on campus. This activity is fun for the kids, and it builds pride in our school. We have native gardens on campus that were planted by students and attracts birds and butterflies. In front of our school, the flower garden that was planted by our ESE group and custodial staff continues to flourish. We love our gardens at Nob Hill Elementary, and we hope to plant even more next year!

## **Park Springs Elementary School – Categories 1 & 4**

Park Springs Elementary Environmental Club continues to grow and branch out with new initiatives. The PSE Environmental Club is made up of a diverse group of 50 fourth and fifth grade students. Our students are budding with excitement to help our community and beyond! Students are given the opportunity to map out their goals and projects at the beginning of each year. This year our organization's main goal was to do MORE. They wanted to do MORE clean ups, MORE educating and advocating, and even MORE projects that left a lasting impact. Our passionate students were able to reach their goal for the 23-24 school year by participating in more campus and beach clean ups, creating more student led educational videos and bringing awareness to environmental issues on campus. They even started an environmental campaign to help PSE become more “green.” This year we were as busy as bees, but it was all worth it to make a difference at PSE!



## **Sandpiper Elementary School – Category 1**

Sandpiper Elementary School started off with a thought and a small garden that has now expanded to include multiple gardens in our courtyards. Our school gardens serve as a dynamic learning space that integrates with various aspects of our curriculum. Students use the gardens for hands-on activities, such as studying plant parts, which connects directly to their science lessons. The garden also supports research into ecological history as part of the Cambridge curriculum. Teachers from various grades utilize the space for student observations, allowing for interdisciplinary learning experiences. Daily maintenance of the garden is a responsibility shared by the students, who weed, water, and harvest fruits and vegetables. In addition, the ‘Men of Tomorrow’ club helps with regular clean-up efforts, ensuring the gardens remain well-kept. During school breaks, enhancements and maintenance are carried out to keep the garden thriving, by the teachers. Efforts have been made to restore native plants while removing invasive species, contributing to a more sustainable environment. The gardens play a key role in expanding schoolyard habitats, with students actively involved in designing and developing these spaces. Notably, sensory gardens and pollination gardens are being created to maximize learning opportunities. Our garden has achieved certification as Broward County NatureScape, highlighting our commitment to fostering an eco-friendly and educational environment for our students. We also work with various groups, such as the Florida Farm Bureau and Florida Agriculture to obtain grant funding, ensuring that the garden continues to thrive. In collaboration with the BCPS and Broward County staff, who have also helped the students learn about native plants and the importance of pollinators. Parents have generously donated plants and materials, further strengthening our community’s involvement. Additionally, the City of Sunrise is an active partner, supporting our efforts to create a green, sustainable space for learning.



## Sawgrass Springs Middle School – Categories 1 & 4



Sawgrass Springs Middle School is located in the northwest corner of Broward County. As we like to say “on the edge of the Everglades, the center of our environment”. The environmental innovative program at Sawgrass Springs Middle serves to create a generation of environmental stewards.



Weaving environmental science through the curriculum allows students to re-engage with school in a hands-on, project-based learning format. We strive to help students to see that they are the changemakers for environmental action. Through our outdoor green spaces and our environmental science classes, students learn about a variety of topics. Students are the key to keeping our green spaces green and educating other students about environmental topics. Our Gopher Tortoise Preserve, Butterfly Garden and Garden Center provide foundational spaces for students to learn first-hand about topics such as native plants, sustainability, keystone species and farm to table gardening.

## Silver Shores Elementary School – Category 1

For the past 15 years, Silver Shores Elementary School Ecology Club has been dedicated to inspiring young minds to care for the environment and make a difference in their community. From planting trees, creating



pollinator gardens, and school recycling. Our students have learned the importance of protecting nature through hands-on projects and teamwork. The club has grown into a space where students explore eco-friendly habits, build leadership skills, and develop a lifelong appreciation for the planet. We have actively worked on our school grounds enhancement this year. We successfully implemented a school ground project to create a greener, sustainable and interactive environment. We established two sensory gardens for our IND and Kindergarten students with the support of the Farm Bureau grant. This initiative has provided students with hands-on learning opportunities.

This collaboration with the Eco Club and teachers opens this learning experience to all our students. This project has transformed our campus into a thriving ecological and educational space for all to enjoy. We were grateful for the support of the grant to help us bring the garden to all our students. The club meets two days a week and these ambitious Fifth graders are committed to fostering environmental awareness and be the ambassadors to help educate and create an environmentally friendly school culture. Each year the eco club members participate in educational activities, that includes a school wide initiative from recycling to water conservation and reducing the carbon footprint with the how low can you go challenge. They maintain the gardens and collaborate with students and staff to help make sure we inspire our SSE students to become responsible citizens. They are our future environmentally conscious leaders. Together, we all have planted seeds, both in the soil and in the hearts of our students, staff and community.

## Silver Trail Middle School – Category 1



Silver Trail Middle School is the perfect mix of suburban and rural communities. We have students living in everything from apartments to small farms. The sharing of information between those cross-cultural populations is never ending. By using the outdoors as a classroom, all our students are benefiting from the lessons on the environmental and sustainability issues that face everyone in the community and beyond. This year, in addition to a specific focus on water sustainability, the Global Perspectives, Photography, and STEAM students have been engaged in

ongoing projects which provide students with exploration of growing both vegetables and pollinator plants. Students from previous year classes designed and planted native pollinator plants to expand a small existing butterfly garden on the school campus. Currently, students are adding to the garden by adding new plants and maintaining the garden areas by weeding and mulching. By using the TDIF Grant funds in previous years, our butterfly garden expanded from a small 10-foot by 10-foot area to a sprawling pathway through 120 feet of pollinator plants. The next segment of the project involves replacing older bushes and plants that were no longer thriving in our school courtyard area. The plan is to transition to Florida native plants that encourage additional pollination and wildlife sustainability. In addition, the student vegetable garden, which was destroyed by landscaping machines, is being moved to an area closer to classrooms to provide easier access for students to learn about planting herbs and edible plants. Lessons focus on the study of biodiversity and native habitats of both plants and animals in the area.



## South Plantation High School – Category 1



South Plantation High School's Environmental Science Magnet program is all about getting out into the field to learn about and explore our diverse ecosystems in South Florida. Students are expected to get their hands dirty on any given day because one cannot fully understand and appreciate the needs of the environment unless you go out in the environment. Students have maintained and expanded outdoor learning labs to enhance students' connection to the environment and extend our National Wildlife Federation Certified Habitat and Florida Friendly Yard areas. The existing garden beds were refurbished with new soil and borders, and new waterwise drip

irrigation was installed. A Food Forest program began this year across campus where students planted numerous fruit-bearing trees that also provide habitat. Sustainability is a core value of the Environmental Science Magnet Program. The motto that has been adopted to promote positive change on campus is "we are all connected so we are all affected. Each year, magnet seniors demonstrate knowledge and understanding of society's impact on the natural world by completing a civic action based, senior project. This project is a culmination of their four years in the magnet program. In addition, real-life application of classroom instruction is accomplished, in part, through active participation from community partners. Students participate in environmentally themed field trips throughout their 4 years in the Magnet Program and follow up activities challenge them to deepen their understanding of how human interactions with those environments can either help or hinder that natural world. The Magnet program's vision is to empower students to compete in a global marketplace in environmental science and technology, and to prepare students for



real-world experiences including restoring Florida's Everglades. This year's theme is "Preserve Paradise, Protect our Everglades and Beyond." Having students learn about the issues in our environmental community, then try to make a change through civic engagement, makes them prepared to be active environmental stewards of the next generation!



The Broward P3 Eco-Challenge initiative is a multi-divisional and organizational effort among the Applied Learning Department of the Office of Academics, Environmental Health & Safety Department, and its partners, the Broward County Natural Resources Division, and the Environmental Conservation Organization (ECO).



[browardschools.com/p3](http://browardschools.com/p3)

[broward.org/NaturalResources](http://broward.org/NaturalResources)

[eco-tan.org/](http://eco-tan.org/)

### Meet your Environmental Specialists Duo



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