



Environmental Education 2019-2020



Through in-depth, hands-on experiences, students will develop a deeper understanding of the natural world around them, locally and globally, through our Environmental Education program. We want students to grow as natural learners, feel a deeper connection with nature, and develop a greater sense of environmental stewardship to the Earth.

September – Peace and Sustainability

Animals of Peace: Incorporating Native American traditions, students will discover how animals around the world are viewed as symbols of peace and the importance of our connection to nature through peaceful coexistence.

Autumnal Equinox: The first day of Fall, the Autumnal Equinox celebrates the changing seasons. The harvest season has come, leaves will begin to change colors, days will get shorter and colder, and it is time to prepare for the winter ahead.

Sustainability: This exploration will be on going throughout our school year, to help develop an attitude of sustainability and stewardship at our school. Our vermicomposting bin (a.k.a. worm bin) will rotate throughout each classroom for students to learn about and care for our school worms. Students will understand the 3R's (reducing, reusing, and recycling) and develop good classroom collaborative habits on how to be sustainable every day.

October – Harvest

Harvest time: During this study, the students will gather what is left in our gardens and begin to identify patterns, colors and shapes of the items they collect. The students will also dialogue about what local animals might gather food to sustain them through the winter months.

Naturalist Tools: Students will discover what it takes to be a naturalist, a biologist who studies plants and animals as they live in nature. Students will gain experience using naturalist tools like binoculars, magnifying glasses, maps, and field guides that will aid them throughout their nature explorations this year.

Coniferous vs. Deciduous: Why are some trees green all year long and others lose their leaves? The students will explore what makes evergreen trees unique to staying green all winter long and why deciduous trees leaves turn colors and drop seasonally.

November – Hibernation and Migration

Hibernation Station: Students will learn through a series of hands-on experiences that living things have patterns they follow annually, whether it be flying south, sleeping through the winter, or adapting to the elements.

Flying south: The student will discover the great distances that animals must travel during times of seasonal changes. They will meet many animals that travel in search of food and warmer weather including the monarch, humpback whales, and penguins.

December – Gems, Geodes, and Geology

Underground Investigations: Students will take a closer look at the rocks beneath our feet, identifying their differences and similarities and discovering how natural rocks form. Students will attempt their own mountainous building challenges and create their own rock formations.

Winter Solstice Celebrations: The winter solstice marks the shortest day of the year and the longest night. The students will observe traditions from the natural world to highlight this momentous day and appreciate nature in a new light.

January – Footprints in the Snow

The Language of Snow: Snow tells us a lot about what is happening in an environment. Children will learn to observe closely the tracks and patterns of animals and other natural wonders by studying the language of snow. Through their observations and reasoning, students will learn about animal behaviors through their tracking skills.

Shapes and Patterns in Nature: Nature is full of intricate patterns and designs, from the spider's web, to zebra stripes, to Fibonacci's pattern in pinecones. Students will spend time observing nature's patterns, as well as design patterns of their own inspired by their findings.

February – Animal Adaptations

Arctic Advantages: How do animals survive living in cold places? Students will expand their global knowledge by investigating animals in both the Arctic and Antarctic, and discover how these animals stay warm, even in sub-zero temperatures.

Teeth and Claws: Studying the bodies of animals can tell us a lot about their behaviors and habits that they exhibit. Students will look more closely at beaks, teeth, claws, tails, and wings to determine what the specific adaptations could be used for out in the wild.

March – Habitats and Ecosystems

First Day of Spring: This is also known as the Vernal Equinox, when day and night are equal, poised and balanced, but just about ready to tip into the light. We may be able to balance an egg on its end!

World Water Day: There is no better day to explore aquatic habitats and discuss how to keep them safe and clean. Students will explore different types of waterways and the ecosystems that are just under the surface.

Homes and Hideaways: Plants and animals live in synergy in nature, creating a complex ecosystem relying on all inhabitants to do their part. Students will choose a habitat to investigate in depth, explore its climate and landforms, and discover the unique plants and animals that live there.

April – Things with Wings

Ornithology: Students will study native Illinois birds and utilize their observation skills for what birds are returning to Elmhurst. Students will welcome the birds back home by preparing our campus with birdfeeders and baths.

Pollinators: April is a great month to learn about amazing pollinators: bees and butterflies! Bees and butterflies help pollinate our flowers to grow fruit and vegetables and can provide us with tasty treats like honey!

Earth Day Celebration: A day that aims to inspire awareness of and appreciation for earth and our environment. We will look at things we do in our everyday life that respect and appreciate the Earth and think of new ways we could honor our planet.

Arbor Day Celebration: A day that encourages people to appreciate, plant, and care for trees. We will have an arborist come to tell stories and explain what he does to take care of trees.

May – Growing Gardens

A Seed's Needs: Students will study and begin learning about the importance of light, soil and water in the life a plant. Some of the classrooms may even experiment with what elements are more important to a seed's growth.

Classroom Gardens: All of the classrooms will work on creating unique gardens and begin the illustrious growing season that Elmhurst Academy has become known for. Students will brainstorm, design and plant their garden ideas and wait for them to come to life.

Earth Fest: This school-wide event celebrates the bounties and wonders of growing with families and classmates. Previously known as the Nature, Gardening and Recycling Extravaganza, this family event invites families and community organizations to come together and highlight the ways we can care for the environment and educate others to do the same.