

2011 Interview Highlights

Greatest Accomplishments:

West Annapolis Elementary: They have integrated a type of teaching called expeditionary learning into their school year. For six weeks each grade examines a topic from many different angles. They then have a showcase of the projects that parents come and see. She thinks it has created a culture change of environmental learning in their school and she is very proud of that.

Roland Park Elementary School: Since then, we have 4 teachers doing what I used to do, plus an elementary Environmental Club too. Things are actually much better. The biggest change in our campus, I think, is the students' awareness of litter. Our school population puts much less trash on the ground now, than they did 5 years ago. MUCH less. So awareness is growing of how our actions impact Earth, and that is probably the most important thing we could do.

What made you want to take the initiative to become a green school?

Kennard Elementary: She thought that if she became a green school she would raise community awareness of environmental issue.

Staff Involvement:

West Annapolis: They received a CBT grant and eight teachers went to a CBF teacher training at Smith Island. This core group of teachers excitement helped get the rest of the school involved.

Elk Neck Elementary: She had to convince them. When she started the process the staff felt like it was just one more thing on their plate. But she was able to convince them that it wasn't changing what they were teaching just how. They were studying Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences and one of the intelligences is naturalist. "This area has to do with nurturing and relating information to one's natural surroundings." This helped them understand how important it was for students to have learning outside. Once she had completed the bluebird trail, they saw how excited and into it the students were. This also happened with the garden. Though they were hesitating in the beginning they have now gotten into. This is true for everything.

Environmental Literacy

Kennard: She also does a three day environmental teaching event every year called Bay Days. Classes attend 2 days of lectures. They rotate through five 55 minute lectures taught by a range a speakers (musicians/authors, scientists, environmentalist, etc). The classes then attend a field trip the other day (3rd-Chesapeake Maritime Museum, 4th CBEC, 5th Adkins). The rest of the staff enjoys participating in these days.

Roland Park: I teach Science, so it was not a problem for me to incorporate Environmental Literacy. I do it all the time. In Social Studies, the curriculum also includes Environmental literacy, especially. In Art, the Art teacher did a huge unit with the kids, in which students took on the persona of "the Lorax" and spoke for the trees. They created very large posters, which hang all around our school, they are really nice. We all recycle, so it is taken for granted that students are aware of the need for and reasons we recycle. The literary selections our students read particularly in the seventh grade are very environmentally oriented in content, though fictional. For example, one of their Language Arts novels is "Where the Red Fern Grows".

Student Interaction:

West Annapolis: Students really are excited by everything they are doing.

Wolfsville Elementary: Students loved getting involved, they were happy to go outside and get active
Roland: They were always eager, working so hard on building the flower beds for habitat restoration. Lifting heavy bags (40 pounds) of soil, digging in the dirt. The kids were the best part of the process, and made it worthwhile.

Principal Interaction:

West Annapolis: She is the principal but she did touch on the fact that having the principal interested makes the green school process a lot easier. If the principal is excited the staff is much more likely to get excited and it is easier to get projects done.

Elk Neck: To overcome the principal not being involved she worked around/without her. She suggest small projects that have great results.

Do you believe that becoming a green school has changed your school for the better?

West Annapolis: Yes definitely!

On a scale of one to five how hard is it to maintain the green school status? Why?

Roland Park: Now that we have many teachers involved, and many parents aware, things are going much better. Having so many more teachers involved is a huge help. I could not have kept up that pace for any length of time. Literally 4 teachers now do what I did then. That makes it much better for all of us. And more teachers are doing environmental education clubs and activities as time goes on. The Social Studies teacher takes the kids out each year on a litter hike, picking up trash from Stony Run's banks. One year, they collected over 2000 pieces of litter in one day. Having that Green flag out front does make a difference.

Do you believe that becoming a green school has changed your school for the better?

Roland Park: Yes. It looks better, it feels better, the kids take themselves more seriously in how they treat their environment.

Has becoming a green school helped your students academically?

Elk Neck: They have raised test scores since they became a green school.

Has student participation in classes improved?

West Annapolis: Students really like it, not sure if improvement but they are really engaged.

Roland Park: I hear kids making comments that seem to convey ownership of their environment more often. Many more kids have reusable water bottles, instead of plastic. Most recycle their recyclables without prompting, and if they don't classmates remind them to do so. That means they are paying attention more.

Has faculty retention improved?

West Annapolis: She doesn't know but she does think that the teachers she has are really happy to work at a green school. They enjoy it and find it exciting.

Has school pride improved?

Wolfsville: Yes, students and faculty love the school

Roland Park: Most definitely. Our principal declares "Green days" from time to time, when the students do not have to wear their typical uniform if they wear green. I have also sold "Recycle, Reduce, Reuse" T-shirts, which are not our uniform color, which the principal tells the kids do qualify as being appropriately dressed because they have the school name on the back. Many teachers have purchased these, and wear them proudly. Several of the kids have them too. Students are often reminded on the PA announcements that we are a green school, for occasions when it is appropriate.

What advice would you give to other schools that want to go green?

West Annapolis: Start small, figure out what you can do. Make sure you are taking advantage of all the resources around you.

Somerset Intermediate School: Don't do too much too soon, start off slow, and motivate faculty and students to get as much participation as you can.

Wolfsville: Visit other local habitats and schools that have gone green, save documents, start small, and do not try to do too much too soon

Kennard: Understand that it will be a lot of work and that one teacher may be driving force. The hardest thing is getting other staff involved. But also it is good to go for it because it raises the awareness of environmental issues with all the people involved in the school.

Roland Park: Spread out the responsibilities so that not just one teacher does most of it. Don't expect a lot of change prior to the designation, but be patient in getting results, as it takes awhile.

St Casimir: Have a strong committee and not just 2 people. Get documentation early. Show faculty what you expect from them. Know that this is totally doable and that it can work well with the established curriculum.

Waldorf: Reach out to the teachers and get them enthusiastic. Then reach out to the whole school community and get them involved and excited because when they care and are excited they get more involved and it is easier.

Bond Mill: Need to get an excited group of people together (it doesn't have to be a lot of teachers but more than one) and have them get the ball rolling. The excitement is infectious. When the rest of the staff see progress and how good what they have done is they will get on board.