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L.B. schools see 'green'



By **LAUREN WILLIAMS** / THE REGISTER

Longfellow Elementary School in Bixby Knolls keeps its conservation efforts simple.

While school administrators and parents work to lessen their impact on the environment, they're dealing with aging infrastructure and an expanse of blacktop – not LED lights and other modern “green”

technologies. So, they look to basic ways to reduce waste at the school.

“Our work here to be green is not real fancy,” Principal Laurie Murrin said. “It’s pretty simple.”

Murrin and officials from Long Beach Unified School District on Tuesday accompanied officials from the U.S. Department of Education on a tour of Longfellow, where the school’s recycling efforts were put on display. The visit was part of a national tour of schools by the U.S. Department of Education.

Longfellow and neighboring Hughes Middle School made the cut as Green Ribbon Schools, recognized for their work with preserving the environment.

Where some schools are outfitted to conserve with the latest technology, Longfellow was built in 1921 for a smaller student body than the 1,100 kids that now use it.

But the school’s efforts were a back-to-basics approach.

On Wednesdays, students are encouraged to ride their bike, walk or take their scooters to school. There is composting and recycling, and food that previously would have been thrown away now goes to the Salvation Army. In just over a year, 1,000 pounds of fresh fruit and more than 3,000 individual snacks that could have wound up in the garbage went to feed others – something 9-year-old student Alex Woodward-Ganz takes pride in.

“That is awesome because you help people in need, and I love to help,” she said.

Where broken desks once occupied an open-air atrium-like area, planters for gardening now sit in rows with basil and cilantro sprouting up. The school hopes to install bleachers so children can read outside.

Paper in the classroom is recycled, as are markers. At Hughes, the school devoted one corner to a butterfly habitat to foster monarch butterflies and another area for native plants.

U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Director

Andrea Falken said Longfellow exemplified a place best utilizing its resources.

“What we've found with these honorees is they're not rich, they're resourceful,” Falken said.

“They're a great example of an existing school, an older school working with what they have.”

Woodward-Ganz sees areas for continued improvement. She doesn't like bringing sack lunches on field trips because the lunch sacks wind up in the trash. She wouldn't mind bringing a reusable lunch bag, even if she had to tote it around all day during the trip, she said.

“I don't mind carrying it as long as it helps the environment,” Woodward-Ganz said.

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