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LOCAL SCHOOL BRINGS NATURE-BASED EDUCATION INDOORS

Fredericksburg Academy Lower School And Early Childhood Division Awarded Hydroponic Garden Grant

Fredericksburg, VA, January 27, 2024—Green Our Planet was founded in 2013 to bring indoor and outdoor experiential learning laboratories to K-12 schools. Today, they have a presence in 10 U.S. states and on four continents. Fredericksburg Academy joined the ranks in September 2023 when they were awarded a HydroConnect grant.

Fourth Grade Lead Teacher Michelle Midkiff spearheaded the initiative to bring nature-based learning indoors through hydroponic gardening. The grant (valued at \$13,500) made hydroponic beds available to every class throughout Fredericksburg Academy's Lower School and Early Childhood division. Since the installation last fall, each grade level has been developing and implementing individual plans for their garden. Faculty have access to an extensive catalog of lesson plans and information on incorporating supporting topics such as cultural awareness and financial literacy into the curriculum.

These laboratories combine conservation, entrepreneurship, and a number of topics with classroom learning in a hands-on, engaging way. Green Our Planet Education and Engagement Coach Christine Anderson shared, "Green Our Planet is pleased to be working with Fredericksburg Academy through our HydroConnect and GardenConnect programs this year. Through the two programs, students at Fredericksburg Academy now have the opportunity to expand their understanding of STEM, health and nutrition, financial literacy, and much, much more. At Green Our Planet, we are building a movement to create joy and justice in communities by empowering people (including children) to grow food and connect to the magic and majesty of the Universe. Fredericksburg Academy is making a difference in the world!"

Midkiff's vision for the program includes sharing future harvests with the community. The initial harvest was distributed among students, sending each one into the holiday break with bunches of lettuce, kale, chives, parsley, and cilantro. Midkiff, along with Lower School Head Patty Estes, who also recently directed FA's certification as a nature-based elementary school, worked in unison on project planning and execution.

Estes says, "I am so proud of the way our faculty are embracing this opportunity for their students. The impact of this indoor garden program will continue to grow with each planting, but for now, I can tell you that fourth grade's classroom pet, a tortoise named Yoshi, has never been happier thanks to the generosity of every FA Lower School gardener."

Learn more about nature-based education at Fredericksburg Academy at fredericksburgacademy.org/academics/lower-school-k-5-/hydroponic-gardens.

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