



Fairchild Challenge Pilot Program
for Elementary Schools
2008-2009
Annual Report



FAIRCHILD TROPICAL BOTANIC GARDEN
Exploring, Explaining and Conserving the World of Tropical Plants



The Fairchild Challenge fosters interest in the environment by encouraging students to:
APPRECIATE the beauty and value of nature,
DEVELOP critical thinking skills,
UNDERSTAND the need for biodiversity and conservation,
TAP community resources,
BECOME actively engaged citizens and
RECOGNIZE that individuals do indeed make a difference.

Fairchild Challenge Introduction and History

The Fairchild Challenge is a comprehensive, interdisciplinary environmental education outreach program offered free to Miami-Dade County Public and independent schools. The Fairchild Challenge provides an annual menu of diverse competitions that encourage students to investigate the natural environment, appreciate the beauty and value of nature, seek information on environmental issues and take action—at any level—to address them. Students and teachers welcome this free, voluntary program by participating in various Challenge options to help their schools accrue enough points to earn the Fairchild Challenge Award.

The Fairchild Challenge was initiated in 2002 as a pilot program for high schools only. The following year, it was offered to middle schools and, due to persistent interest by teachers and district administrators, the Fairchild Challenge Pilot Program for Elementary Schools was launched for the 2007-2008 school year.

Year Two of the Fairchild Challenge Pilot Program for Elementary Schools was formally launched on August 23, 2008 with an information meeting for teachers and administrators of participating schools. With public and independent schools participating, we reached over 5400 students representing the ethnic, socio-economic and scholastic diversity of Miami-Dade County.

The program concluded in May 2009 with a wrap-up (reflection) luncheon on May 2, at which time Fairchild staff conducted a focus group with participating teachers and an awards ceremony on May 12, attended by over 300 students, teachers and family members to celebrate everyone's achievements.

Program Options for Elementary Schools

The 2008-2009 Fairchild Challenge Pilot Program for Elementary Schools consisted of four challenge options each for students in grades Pre-K through 5th. The options were aligned

with public school curricula and benchmarks of Florida's Sunshine State Standards. These options included:

- **Art – Plants and Their Pollinators**

Students explored plants and the animals that pollinate them. They then created an original painting or drawing that captured this relationship.



*Luis Monte
2nd grade
Sunset Elementary*

- **Creative Writing – “Flower Power”**

Students selected a type of flower and wrote a creative story describing the flower and why it is important to the plant, its habitat, animals and humans.

Grandmother says,
“It doesn’t matter how tall you grow.
It matters how you bloom on the inside.”
Grace Li, Bob Graham Education Center



W.J. Bryan Elementary

- **School Garden**

As a class, grade, or school-wide initiative, schools established, expanded, or restored a theme garden (butterfly, aquatic, edible, native plant, etc.) at their school and created interpretation for their garden. Teachers designed and implemented a wide diversity of lesson plants that used the school garden as a learning resource. Their gardening efforts and outcomes were summarized in a booklet submitted to Fairchild.

- **Environmental Action**

Individuals and groups created opportunities to demonstrate important behaviors and ideas that will help improve the environment. Students promoted and practiced environmental awareness and conservation in their home, school and community. Their efforts and outcomes were summarized in a booklet submitted to Fairchild.

Activities included:

- All participating schools established or expanded school wide recycling programs.
- Hubert O. Sibley Elementary students wrote letters to their State Representative suggesting a ban on plastic bags.

- Sunset Elementary Schools installed a solar powered aerator for their school pond.
- F.C. Martin K-8 Center students participated in the *Reuse-A-Shoe* program sponsored by Nike. The students collected worn-out athletic shoes to be recycled at Nike’s recycling facility.
- W.J. Brant Elementary students conducted a uniform swap. Students gathering old or unused school uniforms that would have otherwise been discarded and offered them to students who could not afford to buy new.

▪ **YouthCaN**

On March 31, 2009 environmentally-minded elementary students gathered at Miami Country Day School for the 2009 YouthCaN Miami Conference. Locally hosted by the Abess Center for Environmental Studies (ACES), YouthCaN is a national youth-run organization that unites environmentally active youth to exchange ideas about the environment and empower others to make a difference in their own communities.

YouthCaN brought together participants in the Fairchild Challenge Pilot Program for Elementary Schools with students from other local elementary schools. Fairchild Challenge schools presented interactive workshops with topics ranging from energy efficiency to the history of pizza gardens. Each school received palm tree seedlings, made herbal vinegars and salad and pizza container gardens. At the end of this inspirational day, all students left with the realization that students do have the power to make a difference.

All Fairchild Challenge options were submitted and evaluated by panels of professionals recruited from the staff, volunteers, board members, partners, funders, sponsors and friends of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.

Students and teachers responded to the Fairchild Challenge with incredible enthusiasm, creativity and intellectual curiosity. The Fairchild Challenge options creatively increased students’ depth of knowledge and critical thinking skills related to nature and environmental issues. Students began to assess their own behavior and understand that as individuals they can effect positive change in their homes, schools and communities.

Participation and School Achievements

5469 students participated in year two of the Fairchild Challenge Pilot Program at 9 elementary schools:

School	Option 1: Art	Option 2: Creative Writing	Option 3: School Garden	Option 4: Enviro. Action	Total Incidences of Participation	Total # of Students Participated
Bob Graham Education Center	241	198	70	91	600	600
David Fairchild Elementary	58	38	40		136	136

Fienberg-Fisher K-8 Center	0	78			78	78
F.C. Martin K-8 Center	125	600		1109	1834	1109
Hubert O. Sibley Elementary	589	137	842	842	2392	842
Robert B. Ingram Elementary	0	0				
Sunset Elementary	458	280	350	350	1438	1000
WJ Bryan Elementary	0	0	780	780	1560	780
Winston Park K-8 Center	535	575	924	924	2958	924
Subtotal	2006	1906	3006	4096		
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS					10,996	5469

The top-performing schools received cash prizes to use for their environmental activities. These were:

- \$1,000 Bob Graham Elementary Center
- \$500 Hubert O. Sibley
- \$250 Winston Park K-8

By earning more than 500 points, seven elementary schools received the 2008-2009 Fairchild Challenge Award

- Bob Graham Education Center
- David Fairchild Elementary
- Frank C. Martin K-8 Center
- Hubert O. Sibley Elementary
- Sunset Elementary
- William Jennings Bryan Elementary
- Winston Park K-8 Center

All First Place individual winners received an official Fairchild Challenge Award certificate and medal. In addition, all participating students and teachers received a Family Gift Pass to Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden to extend their learning to families.

Resources for Schools

Fairchild is committed to making this outreach program accessible to all interested students in the targeted schools, regardless of their schools' resources. The Challenge supported schools with such incentives as modest grants for gardens at schools, specialized workshops, professional development seminars, transportation subsidies, and books.

Summary of Teacher Evaluation

At the end of the school year, Fairchild hosted a wrap-up luncheon for all teachers that participated in the Fairchild Challenge Pilot Program for Elementary Schools as a means to evaluate the successes and difficulties of the program that were encountered at the schools. Results included:

Strategies that teachers used to engage more teachers/students at their school:

- Organize student-lead garden tours.

- Utilizing garden and science clubs.
- Integration of challenge options into required curricula.
- Integration of existing initiatives such as Earth Day activities and recycling programs into the Fairchild Challenge.

Difficulties encountered by faculty/staff engaging in the pilot program:

- Insufficient support from school administration.
- Economic challenges faced by the schools.

Teachers' suggestions to consider for the upcoming year included:

- Offer photo or music themes.
- Offer more professional development workshops and resources to educate the educators.

Summary

Overall, teachers were extremely enthusiastic about their involvement in the 2008-2009 Fairchild Challenge Pilot Program for Elementary Schools and expressed tremendous gratitude for being selected as participants. They eagerly await the 2009-2010 program and the participation of their students.

Teacher Feedback

“Our students... have experiences that they may never forget.”

– Winston Park K-8 Center

“The Challenge was truly a unification force for our school, faculty and student body.”

– Bob Graham Education Center

“Fantastic!”

– Sunset Elementary

“The Fairchild Challenge provides a commitment to preserve and enhance Plant Earth on a level students can relate to and understand.”

– Bob Graham Education Center

“By participating in the Fairchild Challenge, my students had the opportunity for hands-on learning which hopefully will follow them throughout their lives inspiring them to encourage others to join them in living an environmentally aware life.”

– Winston Park K-8 Center

“The student’s enthusiasm makes it all worth while. Lessons learned, research and knowledge that integrates through every content.

– Bob Graham Education Center

“The Fairchild Challenge made me a better teacher.”

– Winston Park K-8 Center

“Words can not express the love we have for the Challenge.”

– Bob Graham Education Center

Samples of Student work ~ Creative Writing: “Flower Power”

“If I were a plant I would be a Poinsettia. I would be important because I am beautiful and I love myself.”

- Tatiana Vega, 2nd, WJ Bryan Elementary

"I had a good life but I'm just sad I didn't have time to see my children grow. (sunflower)"
- Kobe Kaufman, 5th, Sunset Elementary

"Inside my Orange Blossom, I patiently develop an orange that protects all my seeds inside. Once my orange grows, my flower disappears. Through the hope in my seeds, I keep living on. Next time you eat an orange, look for my seeds. Instead of throwing them away like many people do, plant some of my seeds in your garden. Soon, you too will have my fragrant flowers and fruits to enjoy. Now, that's Flower Power."
- Gabriel Hernandez, 3rd Bob Graham Education Center

"Psst...hey you! Wanna know a secret? The coolest flower is found on the Banana Passionfruit vine!"
- Dorian Pace, Hubert O. Sibley Elementary

"There was once this black hairy boy named Carl. He was walking through a beautiful savanna in the southern part of Africa. As he got closer to an area where the vegetation has been destroyed he spotted what seemed to be a Lions Ear. It did not move so he walked closer and soon he discovered it was a plant."
- Andrea Constain, FC Martin K-8

"Ouch! Oh, sorry that you got pricked by my prickly spines on my leaves. Being stuck is just one of those things that you need to get used to being around me. Who am I? You can call me by my scientific name, Dyckia beatae. I am a bromeliad. I am not just an ordinary plant, but I am quite unique."
- Ian Berge, 4th, Hubert O. Sibley Elementary

"I never thought a plant could be so cool and pretty. The Bird of paradise is also known as the Crane Flower. The flower helps reproduce by making seeds. The bird of paradise is beautiful and when I describe it you will love it. The Crane Flower is so cool, I wish I could be it."
- Christopher Forero, 3rd, David Fairchild Elementary