

Racine Montessori School

Rita Lewis, an administrator from Racine Montessori School, a certified Green school in Wisconsin and a nationally recognized Green Ribbon School, provides some helpful tips:

<p>School Philosophy</p>	<p>We believe that nature has to be more than an exceptional event in a child's life. It must be a part of everyday life. When we venture into nature with children, we want them to make connections and to become familiar with the natural world -- to touch, feel, and experience. The world around us is a classroom without walls.</p>
<p>Classroom Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classrooms have a variety of plants and animals, such as rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, turtles, etc. • Elementary classes often incubate chicks in the spring and share this experience with the younger students.
<p>Outdoor Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a nature center with a circle of sitting rocks for outdoor classroom experience. • Fruit trees and berry bushes for children to collect food, a native garden, a Monarch Way Station, a rain garden, a greenhouse for students to plant seedlings and watch them grow. • Several bird feeders. • Students take nature walks with teachers during their 1/2 hour recess period.
<p>Food and Nutrition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students bring a bag lunch with reusable containers. • There is a compost area and each classroom recycles and composts daily. • Students in grades 4 through 6 provide monthly soup lunches for the school. • Use foods grown in gardens.
<p>In the Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older students volunteer regularly at the Eco Justice Center. • Elementary students participate in planting at the Zoe Gardens in the neighborhood.

West Ridge Elementary School

Mary Kae Laing, a 4th grade Elementary school teacher, shares activities from her classroom:

Classroom Activities

How to Build a Terrarium:

Every year students get a visit from the Master Gardeners and learn how to build a terrarium. They learn how it acts like a water cycle, when to fertilize, the type of plants they put in the terrarium.

Soil:

Master Gardeners have taught a lesson on soil, its types, its importance, how to protect it, and the dust bowl. This coincides with the fourth grade unit on rocks and our changing earth. Students understand that soil is a precious resource and is necessary to sustain human life with food production. Students love the hands on activity and many like to tell about older siblings who have done the same project and how it is still thriving in their home.

Hatching Chickens and Doing the Math:

Students love to experience hatching chickens, research hatching chicks based on their inquiry, bonding with the chicks, weighing them, graphing growth, and doing fractions and percent. I received a grant from PPG to set up a coop in our courtyard. I plan on reaching out to Case High School to see if high school students could possibly build a chicken coop for us. Students will learn about caring for animals and hopefully understand that they give back to us with egg production. I also think they would be good therapy for emotionally struggling students.