

Teacher to Teacher is a column by teachers for teachers to share the ways they integrate environmental education into their classroom. To contribute, or suggest a teacher to us, contact Lenore at lperson@beczak.org

Teacher to Teacher

with **Ellyce Cavanaugh**, ELL teacher at [Springhurst Elementary School](#), Dobbs Ferry, NY
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I am the faculty advisor to the Ecology Club for 4th and 5th graders. It's a one-hour after school program for 41 children. One half of the group meets on Mondays, the other half meets on Tuesdays. This is a photo of my Tuesday group, taken just after playing an animal identification game (it was raining).



I've organized Ecology Clubs in the middle school and now in the elementary school for more than ten years and in that time I've seen a growing interest in the environment. Children today are so enthusiastic about outdoor activities. They want to do 'green' work and create a more sustainable environment in our school. They know what should be done and want to teach others how to garden, recycle, compost and eat [waste free lunches](#) and snacks.

There's an international movement called [No Child Left Inside](#). Its premise is that children are too overloaded with organized, mostly indoor, activities. **My goal with the Ecology Club is to take children outside.**

There's a world to explore right outside the school door. The children are very excited to make a nature trail through the woods next to our parking lot and label the various trees and other interesting habits along the way.



Outdoor school gardens are very important. There's a growing trend in schools to have gardens. It is so important for children to participate in growing the food they eat. Tending a garden is a wonderful way to get kids outdoors and get their hands in the dirt.

Springhurst has an "[outdoor classroom](#)." We received a grant from the Dobbs Ferry School foundation two years ago to transform an enclosed courtyard into a garden. We started with 6 raised garden beds, now we have 22. The Ecology Club helps to maintain the garden. The whole school enjoys the harvest with a "salad day" in the spring and "soup day" in the fall.

A group of teachers at Springhurst founded the Green Team on the premise that if other teachers are not embracing green values in the classroom, it's not going to work. Last week we found out that we got a grant from [The Edith Winthrop Teachers Association](#) to purchase books and green schools and environmental education!

Ellyce Cavanaugh started the Free Spirit Nature Camp in 1989, and for 12 seasons led a program that encouraged children to create an unforgettable relationship with the natural world. Her vision carries on as camp enters its 18th season! She was also trained by the Westchester Parks Department as a naturalist. She was the coordinator for nature guides in Hastings' Hillside Woods, and is a member of [New York State's Outdoor Education Association](#). (NYSOEA)

Beczak Environmental Education Center

On the riverfront, one block north of the Yonkers Train Station. Parking available.

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