

“Nature Watchers” at a School in São Paulo

ANA ELISA SIQUEIRA

e ADENALINA DE BARROS CARNEIRO

The Environmental Education work has been present for more than ten years at Desembargador Amorim Lima Municipal School, since the group “Nature Watchers” was created. Located in the neighborhood of Butantã, in the capital city of São Paulo, that school has close to eight hundred elementary level students.

According to its principal, teacher Ana Elisa Siqueira, the “group was conceived with the goal of making the students and the community sensitive to the importance of taking care of the space where we live – our house, our school, our street, our neighborhood, our city. That undertaking has taken place very slowly”.

In the school, the students were the first to join in the weekly meetings, off the period of classes. Every year there’s a group that enrolls and actively participates, taking care of recycling, of the selective collection of garbage, of the vegetable garden, of the beauty of the school.

Environmental education has been a mark that provides material for constant reflection about what taking care of the environment means. For example, since we needed to take care of the school’s entrance, we made a beautiful panel made up of tiles painted by the students and teachers. The children who participated discussed about the plants, the preservation, the beauty, the recycling of material. When we realized we needed a water point, that is, a faucet outside the school, we talked about the rational use of water, its importance in our lives, the lack of water and its consequences. Finally, we built a drinking fountain together with the students. Water on a hot day is joyful; in the absence of the swimming pool, the faucets are fun!

The vegetable garden is also a living place of the school. We plant with the young students, talk about planting, water, gather and eat the result of our undertaking. It’s a joy to wait for the great harvest for the collective salad, or to take a little bit in a bouquet, to make the best salad in the world at home and thus enable the family to taste our undertaking.

The watchers are also very active in times of party, helping in the preparation, making ornaments, cleaning up the school, preparing snacks or a thought proposal for all in the party. For example, the tree of wishes: each

person who comes to the party must place a wish written on sheets of handcrafted paper produced by the group of Nature Watchers.



Photo: an offer of Amorim Lima School.

Young students plant and harvest vegetables in Amorim Lima School's vegetable garden.

It's nice to see time go by, to recall the beginning of the undertaking and to see the difficult development, but one that improves our lives everyday. Despite the difficulties, absences and conflicts, a daily "doing" is built, an increasingly live, solid and present action in everyone.

Amorim's teachers comment: "The young students do, help and take on the undertaking. The older students question. Sometimes they despise, they think it's for the young children. We notice that, as those boys and girls grow up, going through all that, our hope is ever increasing, that some day both the older and the younger students will witness life taken care of, as something belonging to everyone". One day a student wrote on a sheet of handcrafted paper: "If nature is over, we all die"!!! How much philosophy and awareness.

The celebrations on Water's Day

Amorim school used the celebrations on March 22 – Water's Day – to commemorate that fact. Everything was well organized, since more than ten years ago the school established an environmental education undertaking headed by teacher Adelina de Barros Carneiro.

That celebration relied on great support by NGO “Cultural Development”, which made hundreds of cards in which each student was asked to make a drawing or write a sentence about the meaning of water. The responses to those cards prove the understanding of Amorim Lima School’s students about the care we must have with water.

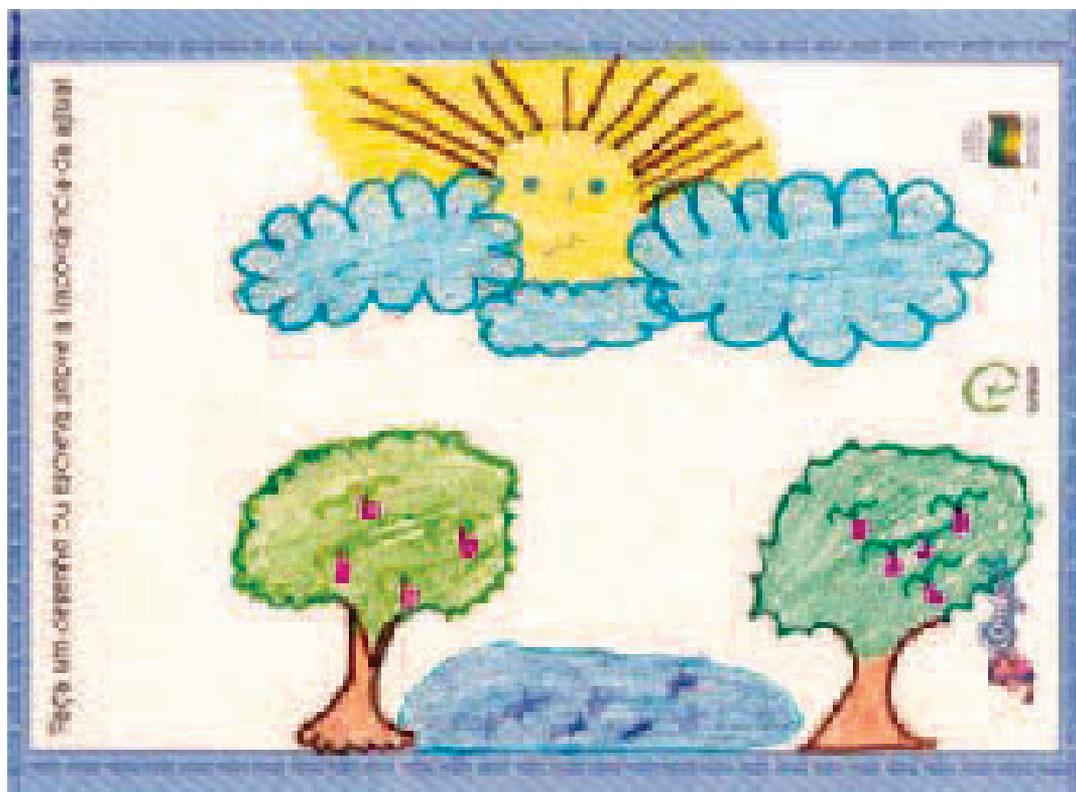


Photo: an officer of Amorim Lima School.

Drawing by Maria das Graças, a 7th grader at Amorim Lima School.

There were debates about the role of water in nature for two days. The students were greatly interested in that undertaking, because in that way they were asked to participate in the celebrations. The entire school focused on those events, even because the students also organized games using water. An example – the young ones love to launch water and soap bubbles.

Sentences by the students

In the cards distributed to the students, each one was asked to make a drawing or to answer the following questions:

1. Is water crucial for life on Earth?
2. Is it necessary to change some habits to save water?
3. Is polluting rivers and lakes bad for everyone?
4. Is most of the planet covered by water?
5. Did I like “Water’s Day”?

Some answers:

By Victor Gonzáles Marques – 5th Grade:

“Planet Earth – a world full of water. All human beings need the water. So let’s save it. Long live Water’s Day”!!

By Ana Vitória Maia Barbosa – 8th Grade:

“Water is important because the first living creatures of the planet emerged from it and we need it to continue our life. If we stay three days without drinking water we won’t resist and we’ll die. We have no idea of what water represents and we have a notion that it’s very important. We must preserve it. So preserve it”.

By Juliana – 1st Grade:

“Don’t waste water and don’t take long showers”.

By Bárbara Vitória – 2nd Grade

“We use water a lot and I don’t like to see people wasting it. That’s very naughty. Water is very important for all people, animals, plants. We all have the right for a world with water, but for that to happen we must save water”.

By Evelyn Iumi – 3rd Grade:

“In question 3 I answered no, because there are many people polluting the rivers and waters. I enjoyed Water’s Day because it was very interesting”.

By Sara Regina de Oliveira – 6th Grade

“When you brush your teeth, don’t leave the tap open. When you take shower, don’t get distracted and keep thinking about life etc.”

By Livia R. Mendes – 8th Grade:

“On that day I learned how water emerged and some ways to help in the saving of water. I learned that if all of us become aware we can reverse that situation”.

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Adelina de Barros Carneiro is the teacher in charge of Environmental Education in that school.

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