

EDUCATION, LIFESTYLE, NEWS

## LEARNING HITS THE ROAD IN LYNN

BY [ANTHONY CAMMALLERI](#) | July 18, 2022



Nyomi Angel, left, and Yhael Cabrera, alongside other students, look at the cells inside of a pine needle inside the Change is Simple learning lab at Thurgood Marshall Middle School. (JAKOB MENENDEZ)

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LYNN — Dozens of middle schoolers formed a line in the Thurgood Marshall Middle School parking lot Monday morning to climb aboard the “SCiLL,” a 30-foot-long mobile Sustainability and Climate Innovation Learning Lab.

The SCiLL is the latest program from Change is Simple, a local nonprofit that brings hands-on environmental workshops to elementary schools and middle schools throughout Massachusetts, partnered with LEAP for Education to offer summer programming to under-served communities. At the event, students had to escape the lab by solving a series of educational puzzles meant to teach them about carbon footprint reduction and climate change.

Change is Simple CEO Patrick Belmonte said that the 11-year-old organization prides itself on educating children on environmental science and climate change mitigation by bringing the activities to them.

“We go to schools for our program, that’s always been the motto. We have always gone out to elementary schools and middle schools in the area because that’s where the kids are. It’s so hard to get permission slips, it’s hard to get approval, the fees to go anywhere can kill any nice field trip, so we bring our program right into the schools,” Belmonte said. “We always like to say we’re transforming classrooms into construction zones and ecosystems for young engineers and scientists.”

After the first group of students solved all of the puzzles necessary to escape the lab, they were congratulated by Mayor Jared C. Nicholson’s Outreach Director Jean Michael Fana, who said in an interview that he thought the program makes it easier for students to engage with environmental science in an “empowering” way.

“This is a great opportunity for the students to have an engagement for an important topic, especially for their futures, and it gives them another way to learn about it outside the normal classroom experience and it creates these distinct experiences and memories and learning devices that I think are empowering to them,” Fana said. “Sometimes big topics like climate change can feel distant from folks, and this helps to empower the students as to how they can personally learn about impact change in their own communities.”

Change is Simple Executive Director Lauren Belmonte said that at the end of each program, the kids walk away with practical tips to implement what they learned into their day-to-day lives. At the event, students learned how to reduce their carbon footprint by reducing their energy consumption.

“We really talk about big topics that can be scary, or overwhelming, or hard to understand for an elementary or middle school student, but we really boil it down so it’s relevant for them and fun for them to learn about,” she said. “We don’t just tell them what to do or tell them the facts, we have them work through a problem and discover those solutions on their own, and at the end of each lesson, we have, at minimum, one thing that they can do to make a difference and help their own health, their community and their planet.”

Nicholson said in a statement that the program teaches key skills to Lynn students.

“We’re glad that ‘Change is Simple’ visited Thurgood Marshall Middle School during one of their summer programs,” Nicholson said. “These learning programs excite our students, equip them with valuable skills, and engage them around education, innovation, and sustainability, all of which are crucial to their development.”

Thurgood Marshall student Starlin Jesus Mora Garcia, 11, said that the program taught him about greenhouse gasses.

“I learned today that there’s a lot of gas in the Earth and that’s a lot of climbing for the environment,” Garcia said.

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