In teaching our students to live a more sustainable lifestyle, we want to improve indoor air quality in our school. Asthma is a major problem in big cities with low income families. Poor indoor air quality can cause **asthma** attacks in persons with **asthma** and increased absenteeism among both students and staff. According to the EPA, indoor air pollutants can be two to five times higher than outdoor air pollutants, making indoor air one of the top five environmental health risks. This year we have a new principal at FHPS, Ms. Sara Long. She wants to continue giving our students the knowledge to be environmental stewards and to give our communities children the best education. We wanted to build a living wall at FHPS to improve our indoor air quality. Everyday our living wall will remind us about our commitment to a healthier life for school and our community.

Since the 5th grade class would be responsible for the construction and maintenance of the wall, we wanted to use something that was easy to maintain. So with a little research we found a product called Florafelt. The felt is made from recycled plastic bottles and a nylon non-toxic plastic fiber. The roots grow into the Florafelt as the plants grow. The 5th grade students helped select which plants we were going to use based on a study we read about published by NASA. We discussed how plants convert CO2 into oxygen and how some plants even absorb toxic VOCs (volatile organic compounds), which have been shown to exasperate asthma symptoms. These VOCs are emitted by many different household products craft materials, cleaning products, copier inks, furnishings, and many others. These products can release organic compounds while you are using them, and to some degree while they are being stored. The students also needed to find plants that would grow well indoors. They narrowed it down to 11 different varieties.

With a donation from Wheelabrator and a Sustainability Grant, from the Office of Sustainability, we were able to install our living wall. We were able to get the plants we needed from GreenFields Nursery at a discount. We enlisted the help of Baltimore City Master Gardener, Jenny Kaurinki to assist us with the actual planting of this project and Yindra Cottman-Dixon, a parent volunteer at FHPS.

FHPS was awarded a Green School Flag this past spring by the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education. A two year application process that shows all of the activities our students teachers and staff have accomplished in an effort to live a more sustainable life. Please check out our website at [www.federalhillpreparatory.weebly.com](http://www.federalhillpreparatory.weebly.com) .