

As part of our environmental policy we aim to improve the indigenous biodiversity in our town using the school grounds, municipal parks and house gardens. (Project based learning)

Some activities towards obtaining our goals were:

1. Students worked in groups and made lists of the plants in the school garden. They used an information sheet to be able to recognise some of the plants. (Personalisation of learning: There was flexibility in how many and what kinds plants they should identify which allowed students to act in accordance with their interests and abilities. Also Emphasis on STEM competencies and Contextualization of STEM teaching as this is a real life environmental project that started with observing and identifying plants in the school yard).

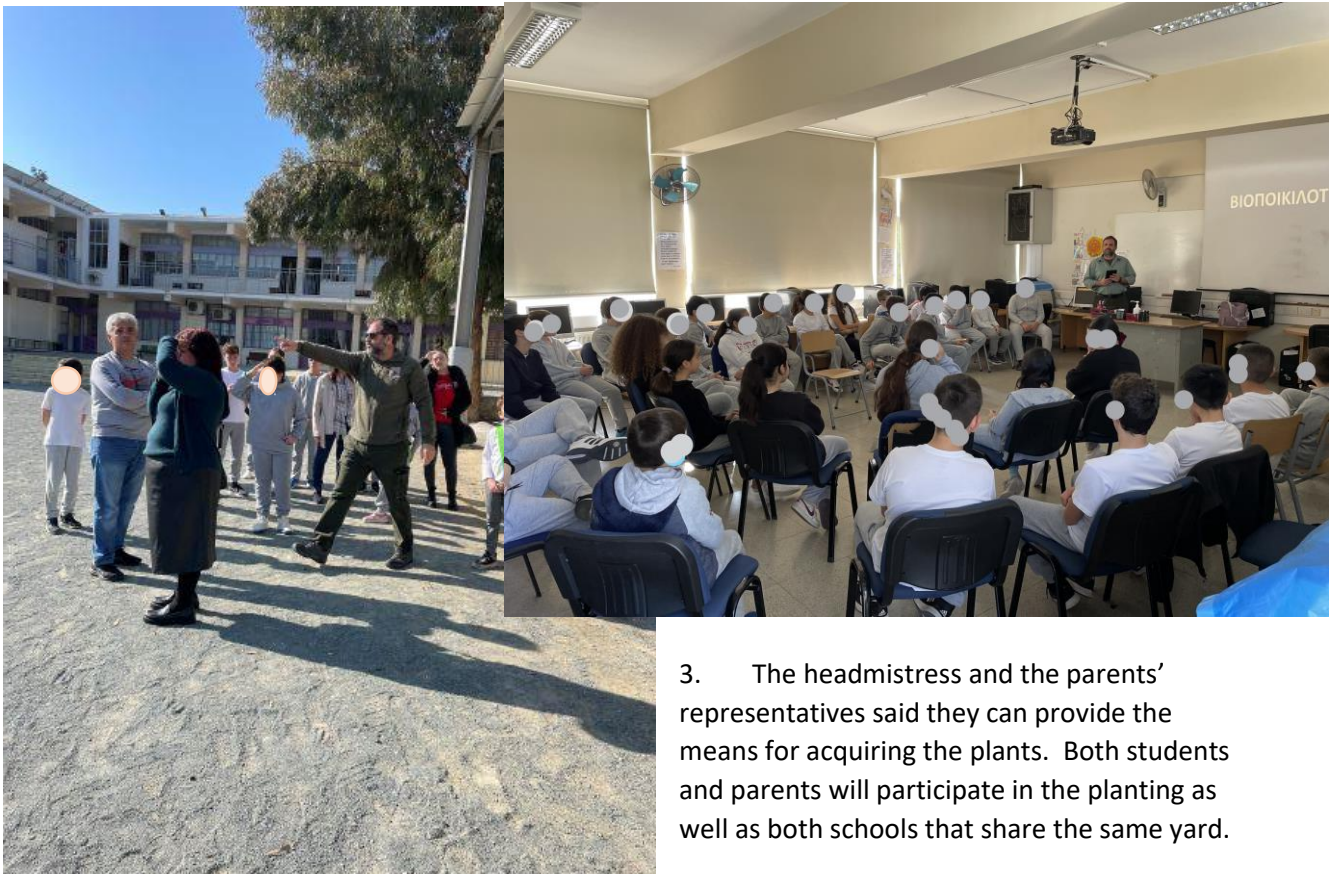


2. Tour of the school with a specialist: a forester (Mr Nathanael , Department of Forests, Ministry of Agriculture of Cyprus – Cooperation with industry), representatives of the students' councils of both schools that share the same yard, representatives of the parents council (cooperation with parents/guardians), the school headmistress of our school and teachers from both schools. (School Leadership was keen to have both schools that are using the same yard cooperate and co-decide on what will be planted on school grounds – Cooperation with other schools). So they made arrangements which also involved changing teacher's teaching programme for the day – to make teachers that participate at the project available and inviting members of the parents' committee. There was also High level of cooperation among staff who discussed in advance the role of the students in this project and facilitated their participation in the discussion with the forester. Common goals about the school yard were set.

Participating teachers then had the role of dispersing information to the rest of the staff and helping participating students disperse information to the rest of the students – through announcements from class to class. In this way the whole school population will be involved in the project and provide ideas (Inclusive culture). All students will eventually participate in planting).

The specialist gave us a tour of the school garden indicating where we could plant new trees and bushes and what kind of plants we should use. He answered to all of our questions. He talked about the school micro-environment meaning the special soil-temperature-humidity of the area and suggested we cooperate with the local community to get more data about indigenous plants that are happily growing in the area. He emphasised the importance of the space between plants and their access to sunlight.

The tour was followed by a speech given by our expert concerning the biodiversity of Cyprus in general and why it is important to safeguard and provide the conditions for it to grow. All 6th Grade students attended. The speech was very inspiring and students had many questions answered.



3. The headmistress and the parents' representatives said they can provide the means for acquiring the plants. Both students and parents will participate in the planting as well as both schools that share the same yard.

4. Making and positioning bird feeders and a bird bath (Problem based learning: what materials will be used? Internet research. Using recycled materials. Where should they be placed so that they are out of the reach of cats that live in the area?)

At the lesson Environmental Education, Education for Sustainable development 6th grade students made bird feeders and a bird bath and they positioned them at various places in the school garden. This aims to provide food and water for birds and increase the biodiversity at our school.



