

Maryland Partnership for Children In Nature

PROGRESS REPORT – October 2014

Highlights of recent actions and achievements.

All reports are available online at www.dnr.state.md.us/cin.

Environmental Literacy – Support for EL in Schools and the Community

Lead: Laurie Jenkins, Montgomery County Public Schools, laurie_c_jenkins@mcpsmd.org;

Co-Lead: Joe Harbor, National Aquarium, jharber@aqua.org

(1) Assist and support Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the development and improvement of their Environmental Literacy Programs (ELP), including fostering collaboration with EE providers.

- *MSDE environmental education briefings and opportunities for collaboration:*
 - Two major environmental education briefings are being planned for November 2014 and February 2015. Non-formal partners will be invited to attend the latter.
 - MSDE will continue to collaborate with statewide programs (such as MELP and MADE-CLEAR, both described below; the Governor’s “Schoolshed” program; and many others) that can help schools improve the LEA’s ELPs.
 - Summer Career and College Readiness workshops occurred at several locations around the state; over 4,000 educators participated, both teachers and principals; provided more information about and instructional strategies and assessments on NGSS; all handouts on Blackboard (msde.blackboard.com)
 - The USDE Green Ribbon Schools Maryland Tour occurred on October 8. Three of Maryland’s Green Ribbon Schools were included on the tour. Folger McKinsey ES, Dunloggin MS, and Francis Scott Key MS. USDE staff, Maryland officials, including the State Superintendent of Schools, and others participated in the event.
- *MAEOE Green Schools and Green Centers:*
 - New Application is now online , including a new introduction referencing environmental literacy! (www.maeoe.org/green-schools/green-schools-application/).
 - MAEOE Staff are working with Green Centers and Green leaders to present to schools principals, teachers and facilities about MD Green Schools 2014/15.
 - Green Leader Trainings will be occurring around the state to demonstrate how to use the new application. Also, the Mid Atlantic Sustainable Schools and Fieldscope trainings have been scheduled.
- *Every Student Every Year outdoor learning experiences for every student every year:*
 - A planning document for accomplishing ESEY in schools and districts is now housed on the MSDE Environmental Education website.
<http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/environment/index.html>
- *Chesapeake Bay Program:*
 - Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) piloted a metrics tracking tool with the goal of measuring the effectiveness of EL programs across the region. Pilot districts provided data and feedback on the tool which is being used to revise the tool. MSDE plans to use the new CBP tracking tool as the way to report the status and progress on their

Environmental Literacy Plan to the State Superintendent of Schools. . The Maryland tool will add additional information now found on the MSDE's Survey per the graduation requirement mandate.

(2) Connect school systems with non-formal environmental education providers and prepare teachers to provide field experiences for students.

- Work continues on identifying and facilitating regional opportunities for non-formal partners to assist LEA's in the development of environmental literacy plans.
- NOAA BWET funds to MSDE are supporting Eastern Shore LEA watershed projects. Eastern Shore counties are applying for funds for off-site and on-site programs, and collaborating with non-formal partners and institutes of higher education.

(3) Work with institutions of higher education to implement environmental literacy training in pre-service teacher education degree programs, to prepare teachers to meet environmental literacy standards before they are employed in classrooms. This includes exploring ways to provide training and experiences in teaching students out-of-doors.

- *The Higher Education Connection workgroup, which includes representatives from a variety of institutions of higher learning, are developing specific plans for two to three strategies/initiatives and recommendations that will work to provide means to integrate Environmental Literacy into pre-service programs and internship opportunities:*
 - University of Maryland College Park piloted a two-day environmental literacy workshop for pre-service teachers (elementary education students) in August 2014. Thirteen students participated – results showed a significant increase in the comfort level of participants with the idea of teaching to address the environmental literacy standards.
 - Towson University piloted a pre-service teacher experience in which two content area instructors – one in methods and one in application of science content – collaborated to provide a student practicum involving stream assessment with elementary students. The college students recently presented their work at the Association for Science Teacher Education conference in September.
 - Discussions are focusing on the use of Methods classes with Saturday field trips for elementary education interns to provide professional learning experiences in teaching environmental education.

(4) Support the *Maryland School Grounds for Learning* project through Partnership resources (regarding the design, enhancement and use of the school grounds to learn about the environment and conserve natural resources). MAEOE is leading the project, with funding through NOAA BWET.

- Guide and website planning: Progress has been made on planning for content of the guide, including revisions and updates on the original guide "Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment: a guide for planning, design, construction, and maintenance on new and existing school sites (1999);" and developing a framework for the interactive online web resource. Case studies are currently being identified and collected (will continue through 2014). The final product will be available through Bay Backpack.
- Professional development planning: Both web-based and in-person trainings are planned, for facilities staff and teachers. Online tutorials are under development, to be used as a supplemental tool. The first pilot PD workshop (for facilities) will be conducted fall 2014.

[continued...]

(5) Continue promoting/supporting major statewide programs such as the following:

- The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is continuing the Governor's "**Explore and Restore your Schoolshed**" stream study and action initiative, with ongoing support among the environmental education community. Workshops are being provided for elementary and secondary school teachers for school year 2014-15. DNR will have competitive grants available for LEAs or partners, to support professional learning and field experiences for students including costs for transportation and equipment (request for proposals to be released by end of 2014, funding for 2015-16).
 - Four workshops completed through October, one additional planned for November; additional workshops will be planned for Spring.
 - Workshops include hands-on, in-stream activities to learn new, rigorous science-based field investigations for both elementary and secondary levels; using technology (FieldScope) to enhance stream studies; making decisions on action projects from data and observations; and curriculum connections across many disciplines.
- **MELP (Maryland Environmental Literacy Partnership)**, CBF's initiative which focuses on assisting counties with implementing E-Lit Standard 1 (issues investigation), is in the second phase of the project. A second cohort of lead teachers is being trained this summer and then will engage in the process of differentiating the statewide modules for local implementation. This will involve writing in local sites, resources, providers and programs that fit with a particular module, and piloting those modules during the 2014-15 school year.
- **National Geographic** began hosting webinars on FieldScope this spring to help teachers and non-formal partners learn to use FieldScope and upload data to the project site – additional webinars are planned.
 - Webinar hosted on Sept 15 geared to upper elementary to high school on How to Use Fieldscope, including creating a log in, maps and graphs, how to enter data.
 - The Chesapeake Bay On-line course has started, with 2400 people registered (40% of registrants are from developing countries). They are also hosting another course later, 8 week on-line course on the water - fresh and ocean for 40 professional development hours.
 - Sustainable Schools FieldScope training webinars are scheduled.

Communities and Community Planning

Lead: Sandi Olek, Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), solek@dnr.state.md.us

(1) Enhance equitable access to green space and outdoor opportunities by incorporating green space planning and access...into state and local planning policy and guidance, because access to nearby nature is a critical part of developing sustainable communities.

- **State and local planning:** In follow-up to providing recommendations for inclusion in the state's **Land Preservation and Recreation Plan (LPRP)** the group is working to develop a web based guidance document to illustrate strategies and best management practices for planning for increased access to green space and to support environmental literacy (fall 2014). This ***on-line technical guidance tool*** will help to establish the link between state and local planning and the goals of the Partnership for Children in Nature.

(2) Continue promotion of Nature Play Spaces as alternatives to traditional playgrounds...

- **Providing technical guidance:** A second Nature Play Spaces workshop will be held on November 6th at Irvine Nature Center. Co-sponsored by the Chesapeake Bay Trust, the workshop will include keynotes from professors Mary Rivkin, UMBC, and Robin Moore, NC State, both of whom are national and international leaders in the field of nature play. To register or get more information go to www.maryland.gov/cin/nps.

Connecting healthy communities with community planning – a decision was made to combine some efforts among these two workgroups as their goals overlap in many ways. See below for information.

Health and Food (Agriculture) Connections

Leads: Health – Kim Martinez, National Wildlife Federation (NWF), martinezk@nwf.org

Food/ Agriculture – Karen Fedor, Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), karen.fedor@maryland.gov

(1) **Healthy Maryland Children:** Explore means to engage communities in health-focused initiatives to increase physical fitness through nature based recreational activities.

- In coordination with the Community Planning workgroup, the Health workgroup is developing plans to host a technical guidance brainstorming meeting. The group will solicit input on several key health policy areas, and seek to identify specific challenges, strategies and recommendations to promote active time spent outdoors with nature. The workgroup is seeking participants and suggestions for stakeholders, and will schedule the meeting for late fall 2014.

(2) **Agriculture/Food Connections:** Continue integrating agriculture education into schools and nonformal education venues as a component of environmental literacy:

- **Farm-based Educators (FBE) workshops:** Three workshops have been hosted this year on environmental literacy for FBEs, with the Mid-Atlantic Farm-Based Education Network.
- **New ag-ed curriculum:** Maryland Agriculture Education Foundation (MAEF) received grant support for the *Chesapeake Food, Farm and Bay* curriculum project. MAEF is currently forming a working group (pairing classroom teachers with FBE's) to begin the first phase of development, which includes writing the food-systems experiential farm-based curriculum for grades 3-5. If interested in participating, contact Peggy Eppig, peppig@maefonline.com.
- **Farm to School program:** Continued work to expand the program includes promoting and hosting Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week, September 15-19, 2014. This event helps to integrate learning about agriculture and food sources, and to spread the importance of bringing fresh, local foods to students in schools.

Promoting Outdoor Play & Learning (i.e. Outreach and Communication)

Lead: Britt Slattery, Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), bslattery@dnr.state.md.us

(1) Develop enhanced communications among the Partnership members and to promote initiatives to a wider audience.

- Ongoing support is provided for all Partnership actions through a variety of communications means. Cooperation and collaboration throughout the professional community is our best resource, with all helping to promote events and actions through social media and other communications networks.
- Celebrate Maryland Outdoors Days was not held this year due to other priorities. A decision was made to consider the possibility of promoting International Mud Day next year (June 2015).

(2) Explore and pursue opportunities for unique approaches to potentially increasing available funding and policy and/or operational support for priorities identified by the Partnership.

- The Partnership's leadership has held several meetings to explore opportunities and is working toward developing recommendations for Transition materials for new State Administration for 2015 and beyond. This work will continue throughout 2014.