

Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature  
Quarterly Meeting October 24, 2011  
at Brookside Gardens, Wheaton, MD  
Meeting Agenda & Minutes  
(minutes provided by Cindy Etgen, MD DNR)

- 10:00 **Welcome** – *Stephanie Oberle, Director, Brookside Gardens & Montgomery Parks Nature Centers*  
Stephanie gave an overview of Brookside Gardens and Montgomery Parks/Nature Centers. She mentioned that a long range plan to get people out into nature has just been completed that includes not only children and their families, but local residents as well.
- 10:05 **Welcome / Introductions** – *Dr. Bernard Sadusky, MSDE*  
Dr. Sadusky introduced himself and gave a brief background on his career and then asked each person to introduce themselves and what organization/agency they represent.
- 10:20 **Planning Rally Summary** – *Britt Slattery, MD DNR (Handout)*  
Britt thanked everyone that took part in the planning rally. Part of what was discussed at the rally: structure of the Partnership and the work plan. The group also talked about the vision of the Partnership (**see handout**) and the visions of the individuals participating in the rally.  
What do we need to address to reach our vision?  
Britt gave examples of priorities that were discussed as a pathway to the vision: *Behavior changes; Audiences to reach; Measureable outcomes; Key partners; What kinds of actions?; Other?*  
Some of the priorities are ongoing, some were added. These were grouped into four priority areas:

**Priority Areas of Focus for 2012** (recommended):

**(1) Outreach & Communication** (effecting behavior change through long and short-term strategies)

We need to put energy toward engaging in an outreach campaign this calendar year.

Long term: research the best approach – Social Marketing

Short term: collective events in the spring, possibly May; promote events at multiple sites, where Partnership folks already have activities happening = way to promote our programs, sites, and show public what's out there that they can do outdoors, all while providing activities/events for the public to participate in on that one day of celebration.

Next step: get folks together to plan this spring event.

**(2) Support for schools as they develop their environmental literacy plans** (involving non-formal providers, pre-service/higher education, etc.) – *Gary Hedges, MSDE*

This can encompass a lot of work that is already happening. Key is communication between formal and non-formal educators and being creative in tying formal teachers to non-formal providers. As a result of the 1990 regulation (re environmental education), some is already in place but there are still gaps.

Professional development for both groups is essential as is increased participation with higher education. Local communities and after school programs need to be part of the environmental literacy equation.

Mary Cary (MSDE) is sending a letter out this week to the Superintendents. Counties need to look at where the 8 environmental standards are being addressed.

There will be opportunities for briefings at the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) conference in February. Gary Hedges and Laurie Jenkins will be presenting these sessions to update formal and non-formal educators.

Gary also mentioned the state's five (5) professional development regions and the possibility of reinvigorating those sessions. Purpose will be to provide information on the requirements, help school

systems plan their e-lit programs, and also possibly serve to connect formal school system educators and non-formal EE providers in their local area.

Gary also mentioned the back mapping that was done on the standards by stakeholders. There will be one-stop shopping for Environmental Literacy on the MSDE website including: the Planning Assistance Survey, the E-Lit Toolkit, the Common Qualities document (currently with Mary Cary right now for approval), and more.

Britt stated that CIN can help to bring everyone together. The general consensus is that the non-formal folks want to help counties with meeting their E-Lit plans and the graduation requirement, but some are not sure how to do it. Britt talked about the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association meeting that several CIN people attended. She gave the example of that meeting as ~75 people in the room that want to help – particularly by providing outdoor venues and programs for students.

### **(3) Communities/community planning** (trails, green space engaging planners) – *Steve Carr, MD DNR*

Steve talked about the goal of linking all public lands in Maryland (Federal, State, Local, and those lands in easements) with places that Marylanders live, work, and play. They are working on baseline maps to see where there are gaps. Land Preservation Recreation Plans (LPRP's) must be submitted by all counties by the end of this year; the plans will roll out in July. Although it is too late to impact those plans, the State Comprehensive Recreation Plan is due in January, 2013 and input could be provided in that plan to possibly link with CIN goals. If this group can put energy behind this, we can move toward/pave the way for larger actions.

### **(4) Health & Food (agriculture) Connections** (outdoor play benefits to human health; agriculture education, local food sources)

There are local and national programs; with many schools and communities working on programs that provide local foods in schools, also schools and communities growing gardens.

**Discussion on Priority Areas of Focus:** Group input on initiatives, how ongoing activities are incorporated, opportunities for collaboration and working across initiatives; Next steps for work plan development; identify action items.

We do need to continue coordination between school programs and those that are not within the school systems.

Don Baugh (CBF) made a recommendation (given where we are in the economy and the operative thing is going to be partnerships) that at the next and subsequent meetings a chunk of time is set aside for counties to come with their draft E-Lit plans and present to the CIN Partnership. Perhaps 4 hours per meeting so that counties can also see what is available from local service providers. This will be considered as regional meetings, other communications opportunities and school system support are planned.

Question for Dr. Sadusky from Joe Richardson of Frederick Co re possibility of establishing private funding endowment to support E-Lit in schools.

Jamie Baxter (CBT) talked about his meetings with school officials (from Garrett to Worcester counties) that have submitted letters of intent to CBT for funding assistance to develop their Environmental Literacy Plans (ELP's). Jamie did mention that some service providers were at the table, already working with the school systems.

Discussion on how you change what you are doing, develop plans, do more with less and mapping how much this will cost and who will be funding the implementation...schools, parents, etc. This planning will be how systems are initiating things like the common core curriculum, STEM, and more.

Laura Collard (MAEOE): Communication is key and while the work is being done locally with local providers the ground work must begin for those providers to support the local systems. We need to make sure that they (the providers) have a clear understanding of the vision and how they can link to the familiar: Common Core Standards and STEM....this will help to break down barriers.

Julie Dieguez (NCLI) – Reiterated Laura’s comment that there are varied levels of understanding by the providers. Julie suggested that perhaps a pre-cursor to potential meetings (that Don mentioned) could be a webinar to get service providers up to speed on ELP’s, standards, and how they can best help school systems.

Britt...more to come stay tuned....

Do you see a role for yourself in these categories? [many said they did]

Any gaps? No comments.

#### **NEXT: 2012 Work Plan** (slide)

- Identify leads on initiatives (some exist, some new) **ACTION ITEM:** If you are interested in being a lead, please contact Britt by **November 7<sup>th</sup> – date changed to Nov 18.**
- Establish work groups – Britt will be reaching out...**ACTION ITEM:** Contact Britt by **November 7<sup>th</sup> – date changed to Nov 18** to let her know if you are interested in joining one of the work groups.
- Members join work groups
- Plan the actions

**Building the Strategy** (slide) – Work groups will be asked to develop plans for their initiatives, including the following:

- Next steps and general timeline  
Immediate; over the next 12 months, long term
- Measurable desired results  
Outline for each task/action
- Who is needed to accomplish these tasks?
- Needs – partners, funds, information, tools....

#### **11:00 New Partnership Agreement** – *Joe Gill, MD DNR*

Review draft outline of strengthened model for the Partnership’s leadership, structure and operations, to best support implementation. **(Hand out)** Group discussion. Next steps. Identify Actions Items.

Joe showed a slide of the current organization and it is confusing. “Anything worth doing, is worth doing.” We will be using a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) because money is not involved (and agency attorneys don’t need to review).

Several key words:

**PROGRAM** – committing to something – moving the Partnership planning effort to a Program of action.

**FINITE PERIOD OF TIME** – 5 years

**CAPACITY TO CONTRIBUTE** – because of work time can not commit 100%, asking to commit the resources of your organization.

Question on how to move forward if we continued to use the old structure, there is the need to simplify the structure.

Comments & Observations:

Karen Mullin (USFWS) had a question about message control. Who speaks for the Partnership?

Laura Collard (MAEOE): we need to have agreement within the partnership before items go to the leadership level. Sign-off. Levels. Otherwise it is a top down message.

At what level does the entire partnership engage?

Britt: Clarification: There is a need for more structure. Other than the core group of people that come to every meeting, the group is different every time. We need to establish leadership and accountability.

Continuity of membership: Steering committee brings things up to the leadership as well as moves them down to all involved.

Work Group Leads – smallest visual in the pyramid, but this is the group that will devote the most time. These are not necessarily signatories, but will have a connection to the decision making process.

Discussion on who meets and how often. Joe offered that Leadership Team does not need to meet quarterly, twice per year is likely enough. Refer to agreement handout where meeting frequency is described.

**ACTION ITEM:** any changes or comments in reference to this document should be sent to Britt no later than **November 7<sup>th</sup>**.

Next steps discussion: Will invitations be sent out to original Partnership members? Folks that have been participating and want to be signatories need to identify themselves. At this point it is being left to those (signatories) that can commit resources, participate, and assign staff. This is a very significant contribution that is being asked of people. To assure that all important entities are represented, depending on who steps up as signatories, we may need to reach out to fill gaps.

NEXT: Formalize Agreement (slide)

- Develop the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), attach work plan
- Identify signatories
  - Name representatives on Leadership Team
  - Designate staff to Steering Committee
- Signing Ceremony – Sign MOA
  - Members can sign “pledge”
- Establish leads/work groups (as we develop work plans and continue working toward goals)

**ACTION ITEM:** Britt to send pyramid structure slide to everyone.

**ACTION ITEM: If you want to be a signatory please contact Britt by November 18<sup>th</sup> – date extended to Nov 23.** We want all signatories to be identified by then.

**11:45 National Scale:**

**Aligning with Federal initiatives** – *Britt Slattery*

Next week is Mid-Atlantic Environmental Literacy Summit providing an opportunity to learn about ways we can tie in with federal initiatives as well as some of the federal funding initiatives including those like: Let’s Move, Urban Waters, and America’s Great Outdoors. Will aim to include more info on these initiatives at future Partnership meetings.

Britt also mentioned that on December 1<sup>st</sup> “A Framework for Assessing Environmental Literacy” is going to be unveiled in Washington D.C. by a team of leading experts. That meeting will be available online. Stay tuned for more on assessment of Environmental Literacy.

**No Child Left Inside Coalition** – *Don Baugh, CBF/NCLI Coalition*

Last Thursday the Senate Health Committee passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (what was the No Child Left Behind act). It was the first time that the phrase “environmental education” was used in the Senate. There is a strong vote coming out of committee. May go to Senate floor by Thanksgiving but no one expects it to go through this year.

There is talk about a Federal Executive Order for Environmental Literacy.

Don talked about the incredible publicity for EE lately (nationally). Don mentioned the “Curriculum Matters” article in *Education Week* [Published Online: October 10, 2011; Published in Print: October 12, 2011, as **Environment Makes Splash In Curriculum**]

**11:50 What’s Next?**

-Next steps and recap of action items

-Future meetings: Need to set dates for 2012! **ACTION ITEM:** Britt will do a doodle poll for the next meeting date.

-Upcoming events/Announcements

Laura Collard (MAEOE) brought up an update on the **Green Ribbon Schools (national) Award Program**. There was discussion of the benefits of Maryland signing on now. Only states that have signed on can nominate schools for the award. So far D.C., Pennsylvania, California, and Washington have signed on. Each state can nominate 1 private school and 3 public schools. There is some urgency for Maryland (and other states) to sign on. If states do not sign on and the program does not get buy in like the Blue Ribbon School Award Program, the Green Ribbon program may go away.

Gary mentioned that the criteria are extensive and that environmental literacy is only one part of the application process. It would be a huge commitment for schools to complete the application and they would need help. We would need to identify schools (Laura and Gary have had some discussion on this) and help them through the process. Because of the success of their Green School Programs these states are being looked at to sign on: Maryland, Texas, and Kansas.

**12:00 Adjourn general meeting/Lunch** – all participants invited

**1:00-3:00 Information Exchange** (optional) – [see notes on next pages]

*facilitated by Stephanie Oberle, Brookside Gardens & Montgomery Parks Nature Centers*

Forum for exchange of information and discussion of opportunities for collaboration in the areas of **health, food, and agriculture education** as they relate to children and nature. *Includes garden tour.*

***Thank you to Brookside Gardens for hosting us today!***

## **AFTERNOON SESSION:**

**1:00-3:00 Information Exchange** (optional) –

*facilitated by Stephanie Oberle, Brookside Gardens & Montgomery Parks Nature Centers*

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NOTES (taken by Britt Slattery, MD DNR):

### **Brookside Gardens – Stephanie Oberle**

“Food for Thought” celebrating edible landscapes and local flavor (2<sup>nd</sup> year of program)

Incorporated food in many ways into their landscape – edible, food only gardens, but also incorporated ornamental edibles throughout the gardens

Coupled it with education about local food sources – and lots of connections w/ very multi-cultural people in the community

Green Matters Symposium, annual – have brought in authors and famous chefs to incorporate into – food theme for 3 years – also included urban agriculture

Special events – children’s day annual, 3,000-4,000 people – Richmond Indigenous Gourds orchestra; kids’ farmer’s market; beekeepers (so kids not afraid of bees)

Community Partnerships – Sandy Spring CSA

Incorporated locally grown squash into a seasonal display

All aspects of their operations, not just the growing displays

### **Farm to School Program, MDA – Karen Fedor [www.marylandfarmtoschool.org](http://www.marylandfarmtoschool.org)**

Close to 13,000 farms in MD, avg farm only 168 acres

Have 161 CSA farms (like a co-op instead of going to farmer’s market)

78% of MDers say they are more likely to purchase produce as i.d.’ed as locally grown (MD grown)

Now by law(?) all grocery stores have to say what state their produce has come from

[www.marylandsbest.net](http://www.marylandsbest.net) connecting w/ local sources

Program created in 2008, increase MD products in school lunches, educates about where food comes from, benefits of a healthy diet,

MD Home Grown School Lunch Week –in Sept—have kick-off event – all 24 school systems participate but they don’t all publicize it; in Garrett Co, a high school horticulture class provided all the lettuce from their greenhouse for entire school system for entire week; Other counties incorporate 4H, FFA and FACS programs

Challenges – demand for local food exceeds supply – most suppliers are small to medium sized family farmers – lack of distribution systems for moving local food into mainstream markets

National School Lunch Program – fed funding – divert 10% for locally grown sources

MD 70mill lunches and 24m breakfasts served annually

Farm to School is unfunded – focusing on elem and middle schools, public schools (ltd bec limited resources)

Need better connection from cafeteria to classroom – don’t advertise very well – incorporate education component into program, most successful in schools that do the educ component – Q from group: could schools adopt environmentally friendly purchasing standards / criteria, so they don’t have to go low bid which is often from “elsewhere”? → do have strict nutritional guidelines to follow for Federal funding.

PTAs in Howard Co took action with school snacks to improve nutrition (outside of school lunch system) – as fundraiser for schools – had a local food source tasting event at Back to School Night – parents more likely to send \$ to buy that instead of packaging own snacks.

### **Montgomery County school gardens – Laurie Jenkins, Supervisor of Outdoor EE Programs**

In Montg Co: 200 schools; 146,000 students; 16,000 staff (10-11K professional staff, rest are support staff);  
People from 60-70 different countries living in County

Promoting taking the learning outdoors

Brought together school facilities, food service, safety and security, parks, master gardeners, MD Extension

Go Green website – info on [Creating your School Perennial Garden](#) and [Creating an Edible Container Garden](#)

Offers step by step process – go through School Facilities – incl templates and pre-approved plants

Advises: must have a champion of the garden activity in the school

10% of schools have gardens (= 20 schools)

Audubon Green Kids – helped make schools' edible gardens program a success (Audubon Naturalists Soc?) – included a salad table

Connection to science and health – get buy-in of principals when connected to curriculum

Just a classroom experience, they don't provide food for the cafeteria

### **Parks & People Foundation – Mary Hardcastle – what's happening in Baltimore:**

Great Kids Farm

Real Food Farm at high school complex on east side Balto

Balto Free Farm – ag coop

Hopkins Center for a Liveable Future

Urban ag booming all over the country

Local Children In Nature Collaborative (Greater Baltimore Children AND Nature –GBCAN)

Have reached out to health sector

Nat'l Envi'l Education Foundation (NEEF) and U.S. Fish & Wildlife – train pediatricians to Prescribe Nature (**Prescription for Nature** Program) – Dr. Maria Brown at St. Agnes Hospital, took the training and became a champion – MD Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics – had a couple of forums w/ them, connected w/ GBCAN and brought in the healthcare piece – Kaiser Permanente came in (head of pediatrics in Balto City got them on board) – Doctors came up w/ idea for **Docs in the Parks** – will model behavior, ie do the activities in the parks (they didn't know the local parks well enough themselves to prescribe it) – heart-healthy activities in nature – came to P&P to get help id'ing the places – next, want them to write some articles locally/statewide

Docs in Parks events – one on Nov 12 – docs organize it – have a template for the events, includes games w/ high activity, and games they can take home (ie do at home), healthy food demos/ buying local, stewardship activity, wildlife/wildlife exploration – being advertised through their networks and clinics – GBCAN advertising through their membership, MD NCLI is also advertising

NEEF's funding ended, so Mary thinks now that the docs have been trained thru that program, they are just free to use the materials – Docs in Parks program seems to have come as an extension of that, more practical locally, esp in urban areas – now have about 20 docs gathering every month

Also a Docs in Parks event in March and April; And at GBCAN conf in Feb will have

Rash Field – Ultimate Block Party recently – had an activity at that event – 6 of the docs came and some of their patients came

### **Be Out There program, National Wildlife Federation, Kim Martinez**

Across organization, committing all of their resources for all of their ed programs to support

Involvement w/ advocacy and policy – working on getting it passed

Supporting Lets Move Outside (1<sup>st</sup> lady Michelle Obama's campaign)

Study on sleep deprivation of kids who don't get outdoor time

Study on indoor epidemic, too much media (~7.5 hours a day using technology!) – and organized sports, but unstructured play happening about 7 minutes per day!! – this generation of kids don't even realize that they've lost it as part of their childhood

Reconnecting kids and families w/ nature

Example of Ansel Adams – hyperactive in school, much better engaged when outdoors

Great Am Backyard Campout – had ~200,000 people participating in 2011 – to raise awareness about indoor epidemic, getting families outside – working w/ MD State Parks to connect places to camp outside of own backyards

Also work w/ Schoolyard and Backyard Habitats, Community Certification (~55 registered throughout Nation – in MD, Takoma Park, Bowie, Rockville?, Centreville) – Centreville’s program is a teen program

American Academy of Pediatricians – prescribing a green hour

“Hike & Seek” at Seneca Creek State Park -- ~300 people – 3-6 year olds on a 2 mile hike – had passport stations w/ naturalists

Geo-caching – trying to marry green time w/ screen time – go online to find where caches hidden – download GPS settings and use GPS device or their smart phones to find it – get to take and leave some kind of “swag” (goodie) – have 125 caches in this region right now, 25 partners – can use some additional help to promote

Also promoting MAEOE’s Green Schools program on a state and national basis – helping to support schools to be able to qualify as a Green Ribbon School

### **Tobacco Free Parks – Montgomery County – Mike Hogan? Chief of Northern Parks Division**

Have 2 smoke free parks right now in county – tobacco use also prohibited on and adjacent to athletic fields

Convened a group to gather info in all the jurisdictions – some other counties have some policy in place

Problems/concerns – enforcement (other areas, usually self-policed, passive enforcement – rely on coaches, referees, umpires to ask people not to use products at athletic fields) – also, what about employees who use tobacco? Need to provide cessation programs to support them (in quitting use) – is it “demonizing” a habit in a way that it will alienate people and keep them from coming to the park?? – may be better to have limited zones where ok to smoke, educate them to dispose of it properly, why it’s important to provide healthy spaces for kids

Looking at idea of doing something incremental (phasing it in) – nature centers are another logical extension of the program, becomes a business decision for those who rent out facilities for events such as weddings (ie, people might not rent it if smoking is banned)

Hospital facility example w/ zero tolerance for employees who even come inside smelling like smoke is grounds for dismissal (!) because patients so sensitive.

How fits children in nature – modeling healthy behavior, ie not smoking and also respecting parks by not littering/ impacting environment – key to success is in the education program – promoting healthy outdoor space

### **Additional similar programs or activities that others have –**

- o MD Master Gardeners have the Grow It-Eat It program – teach kids how to grow food at home
- o Balto City Public Schools – Great Kids Farm – teach ag training and ... ag literacy (?)
- o FNSE – Food Nutritional—?
- o Supplement – 13 counties, to expand to 18 sites – Title I schools
- o MD Agriculture Education Foundation (MAEF)
- o Montg Co Parks – 10 community gardens, serve 600 families – best in country – starting a food council for Montg Co
- o Bread & Brew, one of two green certified caterers in DC
- o In the UK, they went cold turkey and banned smoking in all public spaces
- o Nature Play Spaces – expand to include gardens (for butterflies or vegetables)

**DISCUSSION:** How can we help to support these programs on an ongoing basis?

– Come up w/ a communications strategy – Social Media – Facebook, become fans of each others’ pages – Twitter group for EE (not yet being used as much as it could be)

– MAEOE’s website offers professional development – possibly a way to help promote some of this?