

## Maryland Partnership for Children In Nature 2014 Actions

To continue with ongoing efforts to increase outdoor learning and recreational experiences for Maryland's youth, both in schools and in the community, the Maryland Partnership for Children In Nature plans the following actions for 2014, under four main focus areas, as below.

*Seasons listed indicate target timeframe for completion of milestones.*

### **Environmental Literacy – Support for EL in Schools and the Community**

**Lead:** Laurie Jenkins, Montgomery County Public Schools, [laurie\\_c\\_jenkins@mcpsmd.org](mailto:laurie_c_jenkins@mcpsmd.org);

**Co-Lead:** Joe Harbor, National Aquarium, [jharber@aqua.org](mailto: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:*
  - Winter: Host a briefing in conjunction with MAEOE conference, involving LEA points of contact and informal providers, updates on statewide initiatives. [completed]
  - Spring: Members of the Partnership participate in STEM Task Force as part of working groups and recommend Environmental Literacy outcomes. Work to include lessons learned and intentional connections to environmental education and outdoor learning in the STEM Strategic Plan.
  - Summer: College and Career Readiness Workshops occurring statewide; will demonstrate the integration of math, NGSS, STEM, and social studies.
  - Fall: MSDE plans two major environmental education briefings to assist LEA's in continuing their work on Environmental Literacy Plans.
  
- *Chesapeake Bay Program plans to pilot a metrics tool that will show the effectiveness of EL programs across the region.*
  - Spring: Several LEAs voluntarily fill out a draft self-assessment.
  - Spring/Summer: Ensure that elements of the Mid-Atlantic Environmental Literacy Strategy, including metrics, are included in the new Bay Agreement planned for June 2014.
  - Summer: Revise the metrics tool based on comments.
  - Fall/Winter: Establish baseline for metrics across the region.

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

- *Host professional learning event(s)[under consideration, timeline tbd]:*

Plan a professional learning gathering (or regional series) with formal and nonformal educators to continue developing knowledge, skills and relationships important to providing outdoor experiences for students, to benefit programs to integrate environmental literacy with STEM, and new standards such as College and Career Readiness, Next Generation Science Standards, social studies "C3" and more. This may be in coordination with the Chesapeake Bay Program Environmental Literacy Workgroup and their goals to establish and track efforts throughout MD and the Bay region.
  
- *Continue ongoing regional efforts to support development of school system environmental literacy plans.*

(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.

- *The Higher Education Connection workgroup, which includes representatives from a variety of institutions of higher learning, is developing specific plans for two to three strategies/initiatives and recommendations that will work to provide means or models to integrate environmental literacy into pre-service programs and internship opportunities, including training and experiences in teaching students out-of-doors.*
- *Three pilot programs include:*
  - Spring: Use the Governor's "Explore and Restore your Schoolshed" streams initiative as a means to pilot opportunities to engage pre-service teachers in assisting K-12 students with field studies: At Towson University, a professor of education and a professor of science are working with a class of pre-service teachers to assist a "Schoolshed" elementary school with taking their students outside to study a local stream. Feedback from their experiences will contribute to ideas for possible future pre-service activities.
  - Summer: University of MD pre-service elementary education students will have the opportunity to attend a two day workshop to learn about the Maryland Environmental Literacy Curriculum Standards, and plan an implementation project/lesson.
  - Fall: MCPS presenting a proposal to several partner colleges to include an environmental experience in the professional development year.
- *Recommendations:*
  - Fall: Develop and promote a set of recommendations regarding pre-service teacher requirements and opportunities, addressing integrating current pedagogy practices, learning standards and requirements.

(4) Support the *Maryland School Grounds for Learning* project through Partnership resources.

*This project will develop comprehensive online resources and deliver professional development that will enable students and their teachers, together with school-wide and community collaboration, to effectively design, enhance and use the school grounds to learn about the environment and conserve natural resources.*

- Throughout 2014: Revision/ update/ expansion of the 1999 MSDE guide, "Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment: a guide for planning, design, construction, and maintenance on new and existing school sites."
- Winter: Create framework for the interactive online web resource with an action-oriented focus on the development and use of school grounds and green features, aligned with environmental literacy and other curricular connections. Revise topic outline. [completed]
- Spring/Summer: Develop content (ongoing), collect case studies. Develop focus groups and one professional development (PD) theme as template for PD offerings, hold first pilot PD.
- Fall: Continue development of online resources/content, trainings, focus groups; and professional development roll-out to up to four counties in the first half of Year 2.

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

- *Continue support among the environmental education community for the Governor's "**Explore and Restore your Schoolshed**" stream study and action initiative:*

- Spring: Provide ongoing support for teachers involved in year 1 (2013-14 school year) of program, including access to instructional resources and guidance. Promote the work of year 1 teachers and encourage others to participate in the future.
- Summer/Fall: Plan and conduct additional Schoolshed teacher trainings for new teachers in preparation for 2014-15 school year (DNR, with support from partners as needed/available). Assist with promoting and expanding program. Continue to provide ongoing support for teachers, helping to expand online resources available through DNR's "Schoolshed" website, and connecting teachers with EE and technical professionals in their local area.
- *The Maryland Environmental Literacy Partnership (MELP) will continue to work with teachers from several counties to develop a framework for issues investigation at the high school level.*
  - Winter/Spring: First cohort of teachers write, edit, produce first set of modules. [completed]
  - Summer: Begin second phase of the project. Train second cohort of teachers.
  - Summer/Fall: Re-write modules to include differentiation of the statewide module to local sites, resources, providers and programs.
  - Fall/Winter 2014-15: Pilot MELP modules in the classroom.
- *National Geographic FieldScope online mapping and data analysis tool, continues developing/expanding various projects that support watershed and climate change education, Green Schools, Schoolshed (stream study), and more.*
  - Spring: FieldScope app is available in iTunes and Android stores.
  - Spring: Conducting webinars on the use of the new FieldScope interface, and how to enter and analyze data.
  - Summer: New tutorials available to assist with using new FieldScope version.
- *The MADE CLEAR initiative (Maryland and Delaware Climate Education and Research):*
  - Summer: Second MADE CLEAR summit – multi-day event for grade 6–9 teachers and supervisors from selected MD counties. Application of content will be to the local environment and local resources. The plan is that this cohort will review several kits, manipulative and workbooks on climate and climate change and write lessons to be piloted in the classroom.
  - Fall/Winter 2014-15: Pilot lessons and provide feedback.

## **Communities and Community Planning**

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

(1) Enhance equitable access to green space and outdoor opportunities by incorporating green space planning and access, including recommendations on nature play spaces and providing natural areas for outdoor play and learning, into state and local planning policy and guidance, because access to nearby nature is a critical part of developing sustainable communities.

- Winter: Provide a set of recommendations for the revised State Land Preservation and Recreation Plan. [completed]
- Spring/Summer: Identify and work with local partners to evaluate possible policy guidance and innovative partnerships to further the idea of establishing nature access as a necessary

infrastructure for development and redevelopment of communities. Develop list of practices to include in a technical planning document(s), including developing technical guidance on CIN recommendations for local preservation and recreation planning.

- Fall: Identify existing examples of recommended practices, promote examples to local partners through development of outreach materials/presentations to local municipal partners.
- Fall: Identify any policy or program recommendations to advance equitable access to green space.

(2) Continue promotion of Nature Play Spaces as alternatives to traditional playgrounds using natural materials and designs that mirror more natural settings, to provide some exposure to nature and associated benefits to child development, within the more built environment.

- *Implement additional demonstration nature play spaces in a variety of community settings.*
  - Throughout 2014: Meet with municipalities to plan and complete 1 to 3 additional demonstration nature play spaces with municipal partners, pending available resources.
- *Build a professional community to exchange information, practices, successes, resources – connecting parks, designers, government agencies, policy makers, etc.*
  - Summer: Establish effective means of communicating among stakeholders, building from list of attendees from 2013 nature play spaces workshop, and connecting with other professional groups (e.g., MD Recreation and Parks Association, Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council, NAAEE’s Natural Start, etc., as appropriate).
  - Fall: Host a second nature play spaces workshop.
  - Fall/Winter: Join forces with a major conference with complementary goals or other appropriate promotional event, and begin planning for a children in nature/ nature play spaces strand for a 2015 event.

## **Health and Food (Agriculture) Connections**

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

**Food/ Agriculture** – Karen Fedor, Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), [karen.fedor@maryland.gov](mailto: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.

- Ongoing: Use momentum from a June 2013 field day event in Baltimore City provided by the Partnership, to build a local pilot program to address community interests, depending upon Partners’ capacity. Provide ongoing support to Samuel Morse ES with NWF Eco-Schools Healthy Living grant to get more kids outdoors.
- *Longer term goal is to develop recommendations for engaging more diverse audiences in outdoor pursuits to benefit personal health, and that can be used by other health, education, recreation and municipal entities to proactively incorporate active time spent outdoors with nature, and the places to do so, as a priority for all children.*
  - Summer: Host a health forum to engage a more diverse group of stakeholders and partners in the development of short-term, mid-range, and long term goals for the Community Health Initiative; and to explore connections among schools, parks, nature centers, faith organizations, pediatricians, state and Federal agencies (especially those addressing green

schools) and others to develop a holistic strategy. Consult with key partners experienced in reaching diverse audiences for guidance on successful approaches to engaging youth.

- Fall/Winter: In coordination with Community Planning workgroup, develop recommendations that can be used by other health, education, recreation, and municipal entities to proactively incorporate active time spent outdoors with nature, and the places to do so, as a priority for all children.

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

- *Continue hosting workshops on environmental literacy for Farm-based Educators (FBE), with the Mid-Atlantic Farm-Based Education Network throughout 2014.*
  - Spring/Summer: Two workshops in Maryland have been hosted so far, two additional workshops will be held April 7 and July 22-23.
- *Develop and implement the Chesapeake Food, Farm and Bay curriculum project developed by Maryland Agriculture Education Foundation (MAEF).*
  - Summer: First phase of the project will start in July, with the development of the food-systems experiential farm-based curriculum, by pairing classroom teachers with FBE's and developing one-third of the full curriculum (for grades 3-5).
- *Continue pursuing means to expand the Farm to School program to bring fresh, local foods to students in schools.*
  - Fall: Promote and host Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week in September.

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

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

(1) Develop enhanced communications among the Partnership members and to promote initiatives to a wider audience, such as using social media, developing concise materials for events, upgrading the Partnership exhibit, and better coordinating outreach efforts among partners.

- Throughout 2014: Support all Partnership actions through variety of communications means.
- Spring/Summer: Promote Celebrate Maryland Outdoors Days (~June 14-29); consider possibility of promoting International Mud Day (June 29) for 2014 or 2015.
- Fall:
  - Prepare promotional/informational materials about the Partnership for use at appropriate events.
  - Determine a feasible means for managing Partnership communications through social media. Streamline email and other channels for sharing information among Partners.

(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.

- Through 2014: Work with Partnership leadership to develop recommendations for transition materials for new State administration for 2015 and beyond.