

Maryland Partnership for Children In Nature

PROGRESS REPORT

October – December, 2013

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

- To assist and support Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the development and improvement of their **Environmental Literacy Programs (ELP)**, including to foster **collaboration with EE providers**:
 - MSDE continues to with NOAA to assist the Eastern Shore LEAs with their e-lit plans by moving funds from the MSDE BWET grant to Pickering Creek Audubon. The funds will go to the nine LEAs to fund student MWEEs and teacher professional development in facilitating MWEEs.
 - MSDE has collaborated with other agencies on the Governor’s Schoolshed initiative, especially on planning and implementing the teacher professional learning and identifying appropriate stream locations for the studies.
 - MSDE has been collaborating on the MELP and MADE CLEAR initiatives to move both forward to involve more teachers in professional learning.
- Recently, the **Higher Education Connection** committee met to share recent updates and opportunities that may be models that could be taken to scale. Examples include Towson’s work partnering two instructors to enable pre-service teachers to work directly with a school on a Governor’s “Schoolshed” (stream study) project; a UMD and Green School initiative; possible EE summit for pre-service teachers; pilot program between Montgomery County Public Schools and a pre-service program in a selected Institution of Higher Education. Goal: one pre-service package that addresses ELIT, Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that can be brought to scale.
- To facilitate the instructional use of the outdoors as a classroom for environmental learning, the **Every Student Every Year’s** How-to Guide for the K-12 community is currently being reviewed by MSDE.
- To foster **regional collaboration on EE/ EL**, an Environmental Literacy Summit Working Session convened in December 2013, presented by the **Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) Mid-Atlantic Education/Environmental Literacy Workgroup**. Consisting of federal, state, and local partners from across the Chesapeake Bay states, the group discussed the development and implementation of environmental literacy programs. A working session focused on the development of metrics that show the effectiveness of EL programs across the region. Work continued among MSDE and the CBP Workgroup, and the draft tool was presented there for review and comment. Feedback from LEA Points-of-Contact will be sought to refine the tool and have it ready to pilot this spring.
- To improve the use of **schoolyards for outdoor learning**, a small committee continues to work to refresh and enhance a 1999 MSDE guide, “Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment...on School Sites” (aka, “the **Green Book**”). An updated version is slated to include more current practices and add sections on using school grounds for outdoor learning.
- **Ongoing support of Major State-wide Programs:**
 - Several members of the Partnership and many others were involved in supporting the Governor’s “**Explore and Restore Your Schoolshed**” initiative, a statewide effort to encourage streams education and action. To kick off the program, four one-day workshops were presented in October in locations across the state for over 120 teachers from 22 counties. Teachers practiced sampling streams and

identifying macroinvertebrates (biological indicators of health), used a variety of chemical tests to determine water quality, and observed the surrounding habitat; learned to use National Geographic's special Maryland FieldScope to collect students' data and to use with students to analyze their watershed; and got a jump start on planning their programs for the school year. Chesapeake Bay Trust is supporting the initiative with a small grant for each participating school. This spring, we expect students to be getting wet, collecting data, and formulating action projects.

- The Chesapeake Bay Foundation's MD Environmental Literacy Partnership (**MELP**) project with 9 county school systems is in the process of developing the initial draft environmental literacy curriculum modules. An advanced content workshop series was held for the teacher writing teams in December, and there is an upcoming workshop series at UMBC on February 4-5 to complete the module drafts. There are currently 13 environmental literacy drafts in four content areas (biology, government, history and earth/environmental science).
- **National Geographic** Education Programs (NGEP) worked with Maryland DNR and other partners to incorporate FieldScope into four workshops they conducted for the Governor's stream education initiative (described above).

Communities and Community Planning

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

- The Partnership participated in the Technical Advisory Committee of the State's 5-year **Land Preservation and Recreation Plan** (LPRP). The group worked to develop language and recommendations to be incorporated into the "action" section of the plan. Many counties look to the State's plan as a resource for their local programs, so the Partnership's input will ultimately have far-reaching impact. The workgroup will next work on developing technical guidance on the CIN recommendations for local preservation and recreation planning.
- **Nature Play Spaces:**
 - Workshop: The workgroup sponsored a workshop on November 14th at Brookside Gardens in Montgomery County, MD. The workshop included renowned keynote speaker Rusty Keeler, as well as panelists from across Maryland that shared their expertise and experiences on developing, designing and managing nature play spaces. The workshop was attended by more than 130 people from across the state and region. Response to the workshop was overwhelming and attendees have asked for follow up communication and more workshops. The workshop was supported by the Chesapeake Bay Trust.
 - Demonstration project: A new nature play spaces demonstration was established at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary in Anne Arundel County www.dnr.maryland.gov/cin/NPS/JugBay.asp.

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

Healthy Maryland Children:

Connecting kids' health to time spent in nature is a "cross-cutting" goal of organizations which make up the Partnership. The **Community Health Initiative** engaged many of the CIN Partners, to bring all avenues of the issue and a diversity of resources to one selected urban community in Baltimore, the Carroll Park neighborhood, as a pilot. In followup to our June field day for over 300 students and parents from Samuel Morse Elementary (located near Carroll Park), the workgroup has met to discuss strengths of the event and how to use it to continue to build interest among the community. **Baltimore City Recreation and Parks**, and **Baltimore Docs in the Park** will continue as active partners in the Community Health Initiative. Feedback from the pilot project will inform the workgroup's next steps in creating a set of recommendations to be used as a "**blue print,**" or **set of recommendations, for replication** in other Maryland

communities. The **National Wildlife Federation**, as part of their Eco-Schools Healthy Living program, continues to help Samuel Morse Elementary school to develop sustainable practices and get more children outdoors. The workgroup is considering planning another health forum (the first was in June 2012) to bring in more key partners who can advise on enlisting help from nontraditional community leaders, reaching diverse audiences, and engaging families.

Agriculture\Food Connections:

- Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF) and MDA will be hosting an **agricultural tour** of a winery and a hydroponic greenhouse at the 2014 MAEOE conference in Ocean City.
- **Farm-based Education:** A series of workshops organized by the Mid-Atlantic Farm-Based Education Network are underway for farm-based, experiential k-12 agricultural education. Fall workshops took place at the Evergreen Heritage Center, Allegheny County, MD; and the Rodale Institute, Kutztown, PA. Additional workshops are planned for February 5 at the Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture Conference, State College, PA; March 12 at Montpelier Farms, Prince Georges County, MD; and March 16, Maryland Agricultural Resource Center, Baltimore County, MD.

Funding Strategy

Lead: Jamie Baxter, Chesapeake Bay Trust, jbaxter@cbtrust.org

The funding workgroup, along with the Steering Committee and Leadership Team, has been exploring opportunities for unique approaches to potentially increasing available funding and support for priorities identified by the Partnership. The group has focused primarily on funding needed to fully implement Environmental Literacy programs in our schools statewide – specifically, support for student field experiences, action projects, and teacher professional development. Under consideration are any opportunities to engage leadership from a number of agencies in maximizing coordination and potential synergy of existing funding sources, as well as considering potential policy-related approaches and operations solutions, to support Environmental Literacy Programs. Next steps include identifying who should be involved in conversations at what level, and determining appropriate tasks for the Partnership.

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

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

Partnership members provided stellar support for **the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) conference**, an international gathering held this year in Baltimore, October 9-12, with over 800 participants from every state and 20 countries. MAEOE is an affiliate member of NAAEE and is engaged with a number of affiliate efforts. CIN members assisted by serving as conference co-chairs, organizing field trips, providing exhibits and presentations, and participating in the funders forum. These activities helped to convey the array of efforts that Maryland, through and/or enhanced by the Partnership and its many members, conducts to develop environmentally literate students/citizens and connect children to nature. Maryland's work well-represented at this high profile conference held this time in our own state.