



Maryland Outdoor Learning Partnership (OLP)

Full Partnership Meeting Minutes

Date and Time: Thursday, January 8, 2026, 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Attendees:

Stephanie Tuckfield, Olivia Wisner, Joshua Emery, Tom Ackerman, Jemima Clark, Laura Collard, Katie Dell, Lee Derby, Coreen Weilminster, Emily Morrow, Isabel Layton, Melissa Boyle, Trystan Sill, Amy Sawyer, Adam Frederick, Christina Gladmon, Sarah Haines, Michelle Hickerson, Victoria Howard, Katrina Jones, Anna Davis, Karen Fedor, Lisa Jones, Susannah Beckerman, Deborah Herr Cornwell, Larissa Pasco, Bart Merrick, Jo Anne Murray, Will Forrester, Karen Mullin, Joanna Pi-Sunyer, Susanne Richards, Mark Scallion, Shannon Sprague, Victoria Stone, Emily Stransky, Ann Strozyk, Melanie Parker

Welcome

Meeting began at 10:01

Action and Recommendation Summaries

Breakouts

- All Working Groups were organized in Breakout rooms to develop a 200-word summary regarding each of their Recommendations and Actions that is included in the Annual Report.
- Draft versions of what each Working Group developed are pasted below.

Access to Nature Working Group:

Action: Work to create equitable access to Outdoor Learning for All Maryland Students through the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on Data

Summary: OLP currently lacks a comprehensive state-wide understanding of the gaps in opportunities, equity, and utilization of resources that support outdoor learning for Maryland students. To address this, the Access to Nature working group will establish an Ad Hoc Committee on Data. The committee will collaborate and conduct interviews with stakeholders to identify

where data exists and data is needed; compile and analyze existing data from local education agencies, schools, teachers, environmental education providers, and established databases. The work will document where programs occur, who is served, associated costs, partners involved, and barriers to opportunities. The committee will also examine approaches from other states where data application has resulted in greater equity in outdoor learning. Findings will be synthesized into a statewide summary report with recommendations for future acquisition and management of data. Success for implementing this action is defined by a more accurate understanding of current opportunities and barriers in order to better align resources, inform legislative action, and drive continuous improvement in equitable opportunities for outdoor learning for students statewide.

College and Green Careers Working Group:

Recommendation: Develop a Career and Technology Education (CTE) in “Environmental Management, Sustainability and Technology” pathway

Summary: The Maryland State Department of Education should develop a new Career and Technology Education (CTE) pathway in Environmental Management, Sustainability and Technology (EMST) to prepare Maryland students for a rapidly growing climate-ready workforce. This new CTE pathway should be developed in consultation with higher education faculty and staff and industry partners related to the Green and Blue Economy, Carbon Circular Economy in Maryland. This recommendation supports Pillar 3: College and Career Readiness of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Comprehensive Implementation Plan. Maryland already has promising local models, such as Baltimore County’s Western School of Technology and Environmental Science, which demonstrates the feasibility of interdisciplinary environmental CTE pathways and industry-recognized certifications. Courses that make up the composition of the new EMST CTE pathway could be constructed from the course offerings that already exist within various school systems in Maryland. Success will be measured by increased CTE completers, industry certifications, workforce entry in green and blue economy careers, and enrollment in environmental and sustainability programs at two- and four-year colleges.

Action: Revise the Conservation Careers Guide- Update the 2020 MD Conservation Careers Guide - linked here to include new industries, career spotlights, and chapter on MD Youth Apprenticeships.

Summary: The College and Green Careers working group will update the 2020 Maryland Conservation Careers Guide to reflect the rapidly evolving environmental workforce and emerging career pathways. Originally developed as a resource for youth, educators, career counselors, and career changers, the guide introduces conservation careers broadly defined across the environmental field. The existing guide includes foundational chapters on career exploration, skill-building, and job readiness, but will be updated to capture several growing industries and new

workforce models. The updated guide will expand content to include fields such as climate policy, renewable energy, carbon reduction, and the blue and green economy, which are critical sectors for Maryland's sustainable future. A new chapter will highlight Maryland Youth Apprenticeships and Industry Recognized Credentials, providing clear guidance for students, educators, and employers on accessing and supporting these opportunities. Additional refreshed career spotlights will showcase diverse pathways and lived experiences. To increase accessibility, supplemental outreach materials such as infographics and brief summaries will be developed to support educators, employers, and career event engagement.

Environmental and Climate Literacy Working Group:

Recommendation: Revise Maryland's teacher preparation policies and program requirements to ensure that all pre-service teachers receive training in environmental literacy across content disciplines.

Summary: The Governor's Office, Institutes of Higher Education, state leaders, and teacher education stakeholders should prioritize, mandate, and fully integrate environmental and climate literacy across teacher education programs so that every preservice teacher receives robust, cross-disciplinary preparation in environmental literacy. The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.04.17.01 requires that environmental literacy be integrated into Maryland PK-12 classrooms through the Maryland Environmental Literacy Standards, yet most pre-service teachers are not exposed to practices, pedagogy, and skills in coursework or internships, around the integration of environmental literacy in the multi-disciplinary classroom. According to the 2024 Environmental Literacy Indicator Tool (ELIT) survey results, Maryland local education agencies identified high-quality professional development and curriculum planning as necessary to support environmental literacy implementation. This recommendation aligns to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Comprehensive Implementation Plan by revising teacher preparation programs to meet new requirements. Strengthening teacher preparation programs and licensure requirements will help ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to interpret and effectively teach the Maryland curriculum frameworks.

Action: Revise Maryland's teacher preparation policies and program requirements to ensure that all pre-service teachers receive training in environmental literacy across content disciplines.

Summary: The Climate and Environmental Literacy Working Group will create a sub-committee to facilitate a landscape assessment of environmental literacy in teacher preparation programs throughout the State of Maryland. Resulting Data t will be used to develop suggested guidance on the integration of environmental literacy in pre-service teacher education courses and internships. The suggested guidance will be submitted to Institutes of Higher Education highlighting the academic, and social-emotional benefits of including environmental literacy and climate literacy in teacher education programming. Ideally, Institutes of Higher Education will implement the

guidance so that graduating teachers are prepared to implement the Maryland Environmental Literacy Standards (COMAR 13A.04.17.01). This action aligns with Pillar Two: High Quality and Diverse Teachers and School Learners of the Blueprint For Maryland's Future Comprehensive Plan by revising and increasing the rigor of teacher preparation programs to meet new requirements.

Action: Elevate Climate Literacy by establishing guidelines for a Climate Literate Maryland Graduate

Summary: The Environmental and Climate Literacy working group will elevate climate literacy statewide by establishing clear, forward-looking guidelines that define the knowledge, skills, and capacities of a Climate Ready, Career and College Ready Maryland Graduate. By engaging with community partners, the working group will review existing climate literacy definitions and national frameworks, draft and then refine guidelines by December 2026. The process will map how climate literacy is currently addressed across Environmental Literacy Plans, academic standards, CTE programs, and college and career pathways, identifying gaps, missed opportunities, and examples of local excellence. The guidelines will emphasize equity, systems thinking, solutions-oriented learning, and social-emotional skills preparing students for resilience, civic engagement, and a climate-ready workforce. The resulting guideline document should inform future standards revisions, workforce development, and state initiatives, aligning with Maryland's climate commitments, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and national research. This work will position schools as hubs for community resilience, encourage school district climate action planning while ensuring all graduates are prepared for a changing world.

Networks Working Group:

Recommendation: Hire an Environmental Literacy Specialist at Maryland State Department of Education

Summary: The Maryland State Department of Education should reinstate and hire the Environmental Literacy Specialist position. This position is essential for statewide coordination of environmental literacy efforts fulfilling Maryland's statutory and strategic commitments to environmental literacy, including the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.04.17.01 Environmental Literacy Instructional Programs for Grades Prekindergarten – 12 and the implementation and tracking of relevant Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement Outcomes. This position is critical for advancing the mission of the Outdoor Learning Partnership, including fostering collaboration between the formal and non formal environmental education communities, coordinating resources and programming, and communicating OLP recommendations and action items to state and local decision makers to equitably ensure that: "Maryland's teachers have the funds, training, and support necessary to implement curriculum to support student achievement as they relate to environmental literacy." This position is also important for managing the deliverables of a grant that MSDE holds with NOAA, including coordinating Learning Labs. Given the unique expertise and statewide coordination that this role provides, MSDE should follow the

appropriate processes to ensure this position is not eliminated and seek an exemption from the state hiring freeze.

Action: Maintain & Align State Networks Supporting Environmental Literacy

Summary: The Networks working group action is intended to strengthen and align Maryland's formal and nonformal education networks to more effectively advance environmental literacy statewide. The team will identify and describe existing state and sub-state networks, documenting key information including purpose, audience, priorities, structure, data collection efforts, and opportunities for collaboration. Building on this inventory, a state-level network strategy will be developed to clarify how networks can draw on shared expertise, resources, and operating practices to better support school districts and their partners while meeting the priorities of their network. The strategy will establish processes for ongoing communication and coordination across networks, intentionally bridging formal & nonformal education networks. Aligning these networks will improve efficiency, strengthen data-informed decision-making, support local problem solving, and elevate local lessons learned to the state level, creating and reinforcing a strong, intentional system to ensure all Maryland students are supported in achieving environmental literacy.

School Sustainability Working Group:

Recommendation: Recognize and Promote Sustainable Schools in Maryland.

Summary: The Governor should establish a Maryland Sustainable Schools Week in coordination with OLP to promote sustainable schools through communication efforts and to highlight the achievements of PreK-12 Maryland Green Schools. According to the Maryland Green Schools Act of 2019, Green Schools support the State's efforts to address climate change and meet Maryland's Environmental Literacy Standards established under COMAR 13A.04.17.01 Environmental Literacy Instructional Programs for Grades Prekindergarten – 12. This recommendation supports Maryland's commitments to the revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement School District Environmental Literacy Planning Outcome which aims to "Increase the number of school districts that have policies and practices in place that support environmental education and sustainable schools." Green Schools support school district efforts to reduce energy, waste, and water costs and increase environmental efficiencies in schools and are in line with Maryland's Comprehensive Climate Action Plan and school decarbonization efforts. According to the 2024-2025 Maryland Green Schools Program Annual Evaluation, 38% of all schools in Maryland were Green Schools, showing a 2.5% increase of schools from the previous academic year. Support of state leadership will encourage school and community participation supporting students achievement, mental health, nurturing exploration and curiosity, student stewardship, and equitable access to programs.

Action: Support gatherings of LEA facilities and operations staff around sustainability.

Summary: The Sustainable Schools Working Group will support gatherings of facilities and operations staff from local education agencies to further K-12 school decarbonization. Materials will be designed to help public school district leaders, maintenance teams, and operations staff exchange strategies, share challenges, and access resources to accelerate decarbonization of school facilities. The OLP Sustainable Schools Working Group will provide strategic guidance on content development, outreach support, and accessing available funding from the Maryland Energy Administration's Strategic Energy Investment Fund, to support energy efficiency, solar, and decarbonization initiatives.

Discussion: 2025 Year in Review

All OLP Representatives

OLP support staff facilitated a survey to understand the strengths and weaknesses for the Partnership in 2025. Participants submitted feedback via Menti. Feedback will be compiled and shared with Working Group Co-chairs. This feedback will influence changes to practices in 2026.

Survey: Your Role in OLP Going Forward

All OLP Representatives

OLP support staff facilitated a survey to gather information from the Representatives regarding their participation in the Partnership and Working Groups in 2026.

Meeting Closed at 11:37