



# Maryland Outdoor Learning Partnership (OLP)

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## School Sustainability Working Group Meeting Minutes

Date and Time: Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

### Attendees:

Laura Collard (Working Group Co-Chair), Debby Herr-Cornwell (Working Group Co-Chair), Amy Sawyer, Larissa Pasco, Maria Prawirodihardjo, Olivia Wisner

### Welcome

- Participants discussed [HB1040](#) Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Fund – Mandated Uses – Climate Change Programs and how it would influence the work of the School Sustainability Working Group
  - o If passed, would go into effect in fiscal year 2028
- MAEOE Conference in Towson, MD beginning tomorrow Feb 18<sup>th</sup>

### Update – Status of Annual Report – Final Language Actions/ Recommendations

- OLP Annual Report awaiting submission by DNR, MSDE communications team has reviewed
- [Final Approved 2025 OLP Recommendations and Actions](#)
  - o **Action 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.
  - o **Recommendation 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.

## Implementation – Action item – What are our next steps?

- Recommendation: Recognize and Promote Sustainable Schools in Maryland
  - o Next steps:
    - Submit the request for the Governor’s recognition of a Sustainable Schools week using the [Request a citation, proclamation, or letter of greeting webpage](#)
    - Debby to begin a draft and share with the working group
  - o Discussion:
    - Share it at the MAEOE Youth Summit
    - When would we want the Sustainable Schools week? What would OLP’s level of involvement be?
    - Participants decided to aim for Oct to kick off the school year. That would give the working group 6-7 months to get
- Action: Support gatherings of LEA facilities and operations staff around sustainability
  - o Next steps:
    - Administer a survey at the Sustainable Schools Summit on Thurs to better understand the types of resources would be useful
  - o Discussion:
    - Could potentially ask Dr. Sovine, Washington County and Dr. Dyson, Frederick County to distribute or get feedback from other Maryland Superintendents
    - PTA’s would be interested in training/ resources to help coordinate with maintenance staff
  - o Questions to consider for the survey:

- How can the district best support schools in collaborating/ maintaining/ plantings (ex. native plants, trees) on school grounds for instruction?
- Native plants are required in AACPS, but have rules against vegetable plantings
- What kinds of plantings are permitted (veg gardens, native plant gardens, tree plantings) in your county?
- Are there courses for your maintenance / facilities staff to recognize native plants?

## Share 2026 timeline and start thinking about recommendations

- Agenda item not reached.

## Action Items

- Olivia to set up a google document form for Debbie to begin drafting the language requesting a proclamation
- Use next meeting to outline how OLP/ School Sustainability working group would support the promotion of the Sustainable Schools week
  - o And begin drafting an outreach plan (ex. [PSSAM](#))
- Olivia to draft a survey for the Sustainable Schools summit before EOD Feb 18 and then send to chief of operations and sustainability leads for all LEAs
- At the next School Sustainability meeting review the results
- Before next meeting:
  - o Survey sent to LEAs
  - o Working group weighs in on the draft language for Sustainable Schools week application
- Debbie to reach out to Karen Fedor to update her on this meeting

## Meeting Closed at 4:00