



## **Maryland Outdoor Learning Partnership (OLP) Environmental and Climate Literacy Working Group Meeting Minutes**

Date and Time: Thursday, June 26, 2025, 10:00-12:00 PM

### **Attendees**

Dana McCauley (Working Group Co-Chair), Karen Mullin (Working Group Co-Chair), Coreen Weilminster, Sarah Haines, Anna Davis, Lee Derby, Mark Scallion, Stephanie Tuckfield, Jemima Clark, Melanie Parker, Olivia Wisner, Chelsea McClure

### **Meeting Began at 10:04**

#### **What is our unique niche? What are our unique opportunities?**

- Opportunity to articulate a common vision and have an ask
- Unique niche- we're able to ask state leadership to sign off on that common vision
  - o Ex. Every LEA should incorporate climate education into their Environmental Literacy Plan

### **Report out and review of sub committees**

#### **Needs Assessment sub committee**

- Recognizes that there is limited capacity for educators/ LEAs to continually take need assessments.
- Identified 12 existing needs assessments.



- Discovered that there is limited data from students, communities, families in the existing needs assessments.
- Better understanding the status of climate change efforts in Maryland is a responsibility of OLP. Executive Order language: "Conduct a review of current environmental and climate change education efforts in Maryland."
- Potential recommendation: Update the 2010 MD Environmental Literacy Plan as a recommendation of OLP and incorporate climate change education.
  - o What is the information that will help us inform an updated environmental literacy plan?
- Potential recommendation: Education is included in any Climate Action Plans developed by the State.
- Needed action: Conduct a review/ data round up of existing needs assessments and conduct listening sessions with students, parents, teachers and communities to fill in the gaps. To acknowledge the work that the LEA's are already doing in this area.
- Remaining Questions: Are there things in NGSS that all school systems are using as "goals" for climate education? Has there been discussion regarding updating the EL standards to include climate language?

### Communication Networks sub committee

- K-12 Principals gathering in Ocean City, Maryland this Nov for the Maryland UNITED-Fall Leadership Conference. OLP could send representatives to collect information on what environmental/ climate literacy looks like in their building. Expecting 200 – 250 principals to be in attendance.



- OLP Environmental and Environmental Literacy workgroup to attend the upcoming gathering of Principals in “What does investigation of local environmental issues look like in your schools?” Goal of reinforcing the good stuff that’s already taking place.
- Since we are looking to get teacher perspectives, could we give something to principals to give to their teachers?

### Connections to Mid-Atlantic Climate Change Education Collaborative

- Use storytelling and incentives to highlight and support schools in Maryland that are engaging their community to foster climate change and environmental literacy.
- Existing Opportunities:
  - Funding available through the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future for “community schools”
  - Potential to align with full-time nurses and staff to support needs identified through a community assessment.
- Potential recommendations:
  - Create a state-level grant program for schools building networks that promote environmental and climate literacy.
  - Emphasize community-based environmental education.
  - Engage all relevant state agencies listed in the OLP Executive Order.
- Policy Context
  - Delegate Sarah Wolek (District 16) has introduced supportive environmental education bills.



- Existing infrastructure to support this idea:
  - o Leverage the existing Green Center Network (MAEOE) to connect with schools.
  - o Include superintendents and principals in the OLP newsletter to increase engagement.
  - o Highlight models like Montgomery County Public Schools' resilience hub that features outdoor classrooms, CTE links, community planning, and collaboration with the county government.

## Higher Education Environmental Literacy (HEEL) Summit at Towson University

- Professors teaching pre-service teachers are interested in implementing environmental literacy into their courses but see it as an "extra" on top of the established required content.
- There are set courses that teachers are required to take ex. Methods, classroom management, reading, special education, etc. The content taught in those courses varies by institution.
  - o Where in an existing pre-service requirement could environmental literacy be pulled in?
- A recommendation intended to increase pre-service teacher preparedness to implement environmental education was suggested during the Children in Nature iterations of this partnership and met some resistance.
- There was an unsuccessful effort to incorporate environmental literacy questions into a Praxis.
- Background:



- MSDE handles licensure of teacher and set the criteria for what Praxis exams that Maryland educators need to take.
- MHEC does the review of MiddleStates review.
- The environmental literacy standards are required by COMAR.

### **3 Big Ideas**

- 1. Updating the Environmental Literacy Plan w/ climate change education
- 2. Place based community education: Safe and healthy communities' though elevating storytelling and supporting communities through grant incentives.
- 3. Pre-service teacher training/ outdoor education certification

### **Proposed Process**

- Olivia, Dana, and Karen distill the language into three separate documents where each big idea can be defined.
- Those 3 documents sent to the smaller set of people interested in building out those big ideas.
- Idea #1) Environmental literacy plan w/ climate (Olivia to schedule)
  - Jemima
  - Coreen
  - Mark
- Idea #2) Place based community connections (Karen to schedule)
  - Andrew
  - Karen
  - Lee
- Idea #3) Higher ed (Olivia to schedule)



- Melanie
- Chelsea
- Sarah
  
- Folks find times to meet in July
- Meet again as a full working group at the end of July (24<sup>th</sup> at 10 am)

**Meeting Closed at 11:49**