



Maryland Outdoor Learning Partnership (OLP) Meeting Agenda

Date and Time: Thurs, Sep 11, 2025, 10:00 – 12:00

Meeting Link: <https://meet.google.com/djp-rgkg-php>

Or dial: (US) +1 470-499-0030 PIN: 405 518 945#

Attendees:

Stephanie Tuckfield, Anna Manyak Davis, Bart Merrick, Chelsea McClure, Chris Wheedleton, Christina Gladmon, Coreen Weilminster, Deborah Herr Cornwell, Emily Morrow, Jemima Clark, Jo Anne Murray, Joanna Pi-Sunyer, Adam Frederick, Karen Fedor, Karen McDonald, Karen Mullin, Katie Dell, Katrina Jones, Kristen Komlosy, Larissa Pasco, Laura Collard, Lee Derby, Lisa Jones, Lorraine Warnick, Maria Prawirodihardjo, Meg Boyd, Melanie Parker, Monica Wiedel-Lubinski, Olivia Wisner, Rick Garber, Sarah Haines, Sarah Koser, Shannon Sprague, Susanne Richards, Trystan Sill, Zachary Carey, Will Forrester, Victoria Howard, Emily Stransky, Ann Strozyk, Amy Sawyer,

10:00 – 11:50 Working Group Recommendations & Actions

Olivia Wisner, DNR, OLP Working Group Coordinator

Zachary Carey, MSDE, OLP Co- Chair's Designee

- Access to Nature
- College and Green Careers
- Environmental and Climate Literacy
- Networks
- School Sustainability

Goals of the meeting:

- Representatives leave with a general understanding of the recommendations / actions proposed by each Working Group.
- Working groups receive meaningful feedback from the Full Partnership to refine their recommendations / actions.
- Together, we identify which recommendations / actions could be consolidated.

Networks Working Group

Recommendation: Hire and onboard a qualified applicant for the Environmental Literacy Specialist Position at MSDE before the end of the 2025-2026 school year.

Discussion:

- Representatives underscored the critical importance of this position in supporting the effective implementation of statewide environmental literacy initiatives.
- The group expressed a sense of urgency in filling the Environmental Literacy Specialist position.
- Participants acknowledged that the statewide hiring freeze may present a barrier. It was noted that, in the past, partners had expressed the importance of the Environmental Literacy Specialist to the State Superintendent.
- The group discussed the need to determine which MSDE or state leadership channels could appropriately seek an exemption from the hiring freeze.
- Representatives suggested that the final version of the recommendation include background information about how this position was originally established.

Access to Nature Working Group

Action: Complete Landscape Assessment & Visual Map of Outdoor Learning Assets & Partners in Maryland.

Discussion:

- Representatives noted that this effort is closely aligned with the work currently underway through [GenThrive](#), a collaborative initiative that provides shared data and technology tools to accelerate sustainability education and advance health, equity and climate resilience in K-12 youth and schools.
- Participants expressed interest in exploring the GenThrive platform as the foundation for Maryland's mapping efforts. Representatives discussed the recent removal of the Bay Backpack map interface.
- The group emphasized the need to promote landscape assessment/ mapping tools to a wider audience to establish clear ownership and accountability for its management and maintenance. It was noted that MAEOE currently serves as the lead organization for Maryland's GenThrive maps.
- Discussion addressed the importance of ensuring accessibility and usability of a mapping tool for school systems and local communities. Representatives raised questions about how these audiences currently access such information and suggested exploring integration with related tools, like the [Maryland Park Equity Mapper](#).
- Several participants underscored the need to align mapping tools with the ways communities currently find and use information, ensuring that tools like these are easy to use and relevant. The group identified data input and ongoing updates as major challenges, noting that sustained participation from providers will be key to maintaining accuracy.
- The group agreed on the importance of securing broad participation from providers, establishing clear ownership and promotion strategies, and identifying sustainable funding sources to ensure the long-term success of the mapping and assessment effort.

Recommendation: Create mechanisms for statewide needs monitoring with data collection and analysis.

Discussion:

- Representatives emphasized the importance of data-driven decision-making to understand student access to outdoor learning opportunities and identify gaps across the state.

- Discussion included a call for more inclusive and coordinated data collection, integrating existing datasets like the Chesapeake Bay Program's Environmental Literacy Indicator Tool (ELIT) survey and potentially adding a mapping layer for outdoor learning assets.
- Participants noted the need to inventory existing datasets, identify gaps, and determine who will manage, maintain, and share the information to ensure reliability and long-term utility.
- There was a suggestion to pull in academic researchers to strengthen data analysis and reporting capacity.
- Representatives recognized overlap with recommendations from other working groups, and agreed on the need for a coordinated, sustainable system to monitor statewide progress and needs.

Recommendation: Formally Implement "Outdoor Learning for All" in Maryland

Discussion:

- Representatives discussed models from other states, particularly Maine, Oregon, and Minnesota, that have established statewide outdoor learning programs through partnerships between state education agencies, state natural resource agencies, and university systems.
- It was noted that usually states have achieved implementation of Outdoor Learning for All programs through legislation, which provided structure, accountability, and long-term support.
- Participants emphasized the importance of securing sustainable funding, cautioning that while Oregon and Minnesota benefitted from well-funded legislative efforts, Maine's privately funded model faced greater challenges.
- The group suggested exploring an endowment or dedicated funding mechanism as part of Maryland's approach and proposed conducting a gap analysis to identify what resources, infrastructure, and funding would be needed prior to advancing legislation.

College and Green Careers Working Group

Action / Recommendation (TBD): Develop a local AI search and modeling program to help construct learning and building tools specific for Maryland.

Discussion:

- Representatives discussed the potential for artificial intelligence (AI) tools to compile and analyze environmental education data relevant to Maryland, emphasizing the need to have a clear value statement that defines the tool's purpose, audience, and intended outcomes.
- Participants suggested forming a subgroup to assess existing data sources, identify gaps to determine what information could feed into an AI model.
- The group discussed whether the main need is to access existing data or develop new, high-quality data.
- Representatives noted that AI could help integrate multiple data sources. Some representatives expressed concerns about the environmental impact of AI.

- Discussion acknowledged that AI is an emerging and potentially well-funded area, and that any future effort should align with how educators, communities, and agencies currently find and use information to ensure relevance and accessibility.

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

Discussion:

- Representatives emphasized the strong demand for graduates with these kinds of skills in the private and public sector.
- Participants highlighted the importance of engaging additional partners, like community colleges, industry representatives, and other nontraditional stakeholders, to ensure alignment between education and workforce needs.
- The group noted alignment with the Chesapeake Bay Program’s draft workforce development outcome and suggested incorporating environmental management, sustainability and technology into existing CTE pathways rather than creating an entirely new one.
- Representatives mentioned real-world issues in Maryland that students enrolled in this proposed CTE pathway could address.
- Discussion encouraged a broad definition of “green careers” recognizing that many careers have the potential to be “green careers.”

Recommendation: Maryland Moves to adopt 4 science credits for graduation to keep pace with the need for advancing STEM areas that support the advancement of College and Career Ready opportunities.

Discussion:

- Representatives emphasized the need to understand district perspectives, including how additional science credits would interact with the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.
- Participants noted that this recommendation raises broader policy considerations, some recommended involving institutions of higher education to understand how current science graduation requirements align with college expectations.
- The group reflected on the process of establishing the Environmental Literacy COMAR regulation, recognizing that it was an effort that required sustained coordination and time to achieve.
- Some participants expressed concerns about the implementation at the school district level and suggested reviewing implementation models in other states as a potential next step.

Action: Revise or develop a new Conservation Careers Guide.

Discussion:

- Participants recommended creating a more dynamic and regularly updated format for the Guide, allowing for continuous revisions rather than less frequent, large-scale updates. Individual representatives volunteered to help with the process of updating the guide.

School Sustainability Working Group

Action / Recommendation (TBD): Increase sustainable schools in Maryland.

Discussion:

- Participants emphasized the importance of collecting and sharing data on how Green School programs improve student environmental literacy and school performance.
- The group suggested that this effort could increase the visibility for Green School efforts and increase statewide buy-in. There was some question about whether this would be a proclamation from the Governor.
- Representatives highlighted the need for greater public awareness and promotion, observing that some leaders were unaware of their schools' Green School status. There was a suggestion to pair this with the Chesapeake Bay Program ELIT data.
- Participants recognized some confusion between "sustainable schools" and "green schools."

Environmental and Climate Literacy Working Group

Recommendation: Establish a process to rename and update the Environmental Education in Maryland Public Schools (2010) report, to reflect current initiatives in environmental and climate literacy.

Discussion:

- It was mentioned that the 2010 version of the report was drafted by the Partnership for Children in Nature and served as a state environmental literacy plan.
- Representatives emphasized the potential use of the AI tool to review existing materials and develop a first draft for consideration.
- The group noted that a revised plan could provide opportunities for local education agencies to voluntarily highlight their programs and initiatives. Some representatives raised concerns about capacity of OLP to draft the report.
- Some participants identified the absence of a common dataset as a challenge and highlighted the importance of using this process to unify and raise awareness about current environmental literacy efforts.
- Representatives shared that the timing of this effort aligned with the forthcoming update to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. Others suggested that it would be better to update the report after the next revision of the Environmental Literacy standards.

Recommendation: Strengthen and Incorporate Environmental Literacy in Maryland teacher preparation programs.

Discussion:

- Representatives discussed the importance of embedding environmental literacy within existing teacher preparation networks and initiatives.

- The group noted alignment with the objectives of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and the existing COMAR requirements for environmental education.
- Discussion included consideration of potential challenges, such as faculty and per-service teacher workload. Though participants observed some interdisciplinary faculty have already expressed interest in preparing future teachers to meet these requirements.
- It was noted that Maryland universities already incorporate environmental literacy into coursework, but that implementation is inconsistent across institutions and disciplines.
- The group expressed interest in identifying strong models (both within Maryland higher education and in other states) to inform a more systematic, statewide approach, building on prior work from the Project Green Classrooms work in this area.

Action: Investigate the alignment between the Community Schools Program and environmental literacy efforts.

Discussion:

- In Maryland, any school that receives Concentration of Poverty Grants is a community school. Concentration of Poverty Grants provide schools with startup funding and permanent per-pupil dollars to launch and sustain community schools.
- The group emphasized that community schools provide a valuable opportunity to engage parents and to facilitate community involvement in environmental education.
- Participants highlighted the importance of integrating mental health and well-being benefits as a driver for environmental literacy efforts.
- It was noted that many community schools already have liaisons and social workers who could help coordinate these efforts and maximize existing resources and partnerships.
- Representatives expressed general support for this action and commented that it was appropriately scoped for implementation.

Action: Define a climate literate student in Maryland.

Discussion:

- Representatives discussed developing a clear and standardized definition of what constitutes a "climate literate student" in Maryland, noting the value of consistent language across programs and grade levels.
- Participants suggested using the proposed AI tool to generate the initial framework and adapting the results to Maryland's context.
- The development of a definition was compared to previous efforts to develop the Maryland Outdoor Bill of Rights, highlighting the benefit of a consensus-based approach.

Networking Work Group

Recommendation: Strengthen regional environmental literacy network hubs throughout the state of Maryland.

Discussion:

- Participants emphasized the importance of clearly defining network roles, collaboration structures, and communication pathways.
- Ongoing mapping efforts, including those through ROLN/ GenThrive, were cited as examples that could inform this work by capturing both geographic and demographic dimensions of the network landscape.

- The group's key takeaway was the importance of sharing existing network information to streamline collaboration.

Public Comment

None

Meeting Closed at 12:50