

Sustainable Schools – Background

What can the Partnership for Children In Nature do to advance sustainability in schools in Maryland? *To fuel a discussion of this question, the following includes brief information on the state of sustainable schools efforts in Maryland and the region.*

Definition: Schools that reduce the impact of their buildings and grounds on their local watershed, environment and human health through the use of best practices, including student-led protection and restoration projects.

- **Drivers:**

- Maryland Environmental Literacy Requirements – *Sustainable practices in schools offer numerous opportunities to integrate learning and action that meets environmental literacy goals and integrates practices from Next Generation Science Standards and multiple disciplines.*
- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement 2014 – Environmental Literacy Goal – Sustainable Schools Outcome: *Continually increase the number of schools in the region that reduce the impact of their buildings and grounds on their local watershed, environment and human health through best practices, including student-led protection and restoration projects.*
- The Maryland High Performance Buildings Act of 2008: *Passed in the 2008 session of the General Assembly, this legislation requires that all new schools must achieve a rating of LEED Silver or equivalent from a nationally recognized accreditation entity.*
- Counties and some LEAs are developing comprehensive sustainability plans.
- Stormwater regulations – may offer new opportunities for funding, assistance, and outdoor learning.

- **Existing programs (examples):**

- US Green Ribbon Schools and Green Strides
- MD Green Schools Program and Green Centers
- National Wildlife Federation's EcoSchools – a National program that aligns with MD and US efforts and has an online map tool.

- **Resources/ efforts (examples):**

- Model Sites of Sustainability: Alice Ferguson Foundation, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Robinson Nature Center, as well as several schools.
- Maryland School Grounds for Learning project: *Partnership effort underway, led by MAEOE, to create an online resource guide and training toolkit to support sustainability practices on school sites. The goal is to support efforts of all school staff including: facilities, administration and instruction.*
- Mid Atlantic Sustainable Schools FieldScope: *This interactive map highlights sustainable school ground and environmental literacy practices in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. It provides an opportunity to share efforts, find resources, and examine the extent and impact of sustainable schools on environmental health and literacy.*
<http://sustainable-schools.fielddscope.org/>
- Mid-Atlantic Sustainable Schools Working Group: *Effort led by the Chesapeake Bay Program to coordinate school sustainability efforts among states across the watershed, support developing programs and investigate possible metrics to measure the environmental impact of student led sustainability practices at schools.*

- **Decision points / Partners (examples):**

Achieving "sustainable schools" and employing sustainable practices in schools potentially involves a crosswalk of professional areas and affords opportunities for partnership among professionals and agencies such as:

- Architects
- Engineers
- Urban planners
- Health and Human Services
- Environmental health
- Environmental and natural resources management
- Curriculum and instruction
- Parents
- Community
- School facilities offices at State and LEA levels
- Individual schools' administration and facilities staff

