



**2003 CHESAPEAKE BAY
EDUCATION SUMMIT**
Celebrating Success &
Looking to the Future



Strategies for Implementing and Tracking the Meaningful Bay or Stream Outdoor Experience

Report from the
2003 Chesapeake Bay Education Summit

December 15 and 16
National 4-H Conference Center
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Education Workgroup
Communication and Education Subcommittee
Chesapeake Bay Program

**Strategies for Implementing and Tracking the
Meaningful Bay or Stream Outdoor Experience:
Report from the 2003 Chesapeake Bay Education Summit**

Education Workgroup
Communication and Education Subcommittee
Chesapeake Bay Program

INTRODUCTION

The 2003 Chesapeake Bay Education Summit was a success with many great speakers and active participation from almost 100 participants. The summit focused on the *Chesapeake 2000* commitment to provide all students in the watershed with a meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience by 2005. The participants celebrated strides made towards implementing the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience and continued planning efforts to reach the goal by 2005. The planning components of the Summit positioned the group to begin the longer-term Education Workgroup strategic planning process.

BACKGROUND ON THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM, EDUCATION WORKGROUP, AND THE 2003 CHESAPEAKE BAY EDUCATION SUMMIT

Chesapeake Bay Program

The Chesapeake Bay Program is the unique regional partnership that has been directing and conducting the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since the signing of the historic *Chesapeake Bay Agreement* of 1983. The Bay Program partners include the states of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission, a tri-state legislative body; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, representing the federal government; and participating advisory groups.

Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup

The Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup was established under the Communication and Education Subcommittee in 1998 through Education Directive 98-1, the *Chesapeake Bay Program Education Initiative*. As part of this initiative, the directive charges the group with convening an Education Summit every two years to bring the jurisdictions' interagency workgroups and Bay Program partners together with educators to share ideas and resources.

The *Chesapeake 2000* agreement, signed by the states of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia along with the District of Columbia, mandates that beginning with the class of 2005, participating states must provide a meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience for every school student in the watershed before graduation from high school. The *Stewardship and Meaningful Watershed Experiences Initiative* details the elements that constitute a meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience.

The *Chesapeake 2000* agreement also charges the Education Workgroup to ensure that students and teachers are provided with opportunities to directly participate in local restoration and protection projects, and to support stewardship efforts in schools and on school property. Finally, the Education Workgroup must continue to forge partnerships with the Departments of Education and institutions of higher learning in each jurisdiction to integrate information about the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed into school curricula and university programs.

2003 Chesapeake Bay Education Summit

The Third Biennial Education Summit brought together education and resource professionals from across the watershed to celebrate the progress already made and share ideas about meeting the challenges of providing and tracking the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience by 2005. The education summit was designed as an information exchange among the Departments of Education, teachers and environmental organizations in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, natural resource professionals from state and federal agencies, members of the Chesapeake Bay Program's Communications and Education Subcommittee, and representatives from the headwater states of Delaware, New York, and West Virginia interested in Bay education.

SUCCESSSES

The summit provided an opportunity to recognize the successes in expanding environmental education and raising levels of awareness throughout the Bay watershed.

The participants heard and then discussed a presentation regarding environmental education and student performance. Keynote speaker Kevin Coyle from the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation presented research data that shows interactive environmental learning helps children improve scores on standardized tests. Mr. Coyle showed nation-wide there is a high rate of approval for teaching environmental education in public schools (95%), and 75% of Americans find environmental education as important as Math and English.

Kevin Coyle explained that there are six main advantages to environmental education: science achievement, reading and language skills, respect and responsibility, thinking skills and motivation, cultural relevance, and integrated learning. Mr. Coyle connected the benefits of environmental education with education about the Chesapeake Bay, stating that some advantages of Chesapeake education are: the Chesapeake Bay offers a natural field lab; studying the Bay requires a mix of disciplines; Bay education offers students regional identity; there is strong state, federal and non-governmental leadership for implementing Bay education; Bay education is applicable to a mix of schools and cultures; and, Bay education is positioned for policy observation.

Representatives of the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia presented overviews of the implementation of the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience in their jurisdictions. These representatives showed that such experiences

are being provided throughout much of each of their jurisdictions. Though the jurisdictions face challenges to meet the *Chesapeake 2000* goal of providing every student with the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience by 2005, there have been significant successes.

The participants heard presentations about several successful, high quality programs for providing meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experiences. These presentations included schoolyard and outdoor classrooms programs, providing students on-the-water experiences, community education and restoration programs that improve the local environment, and headwaters education programs. In the group discussions that followed, participants talked about what worked with each program, what did not work and how such programs could be used in local school districts. As the presentations and discussions demonstrated, much is already being done to educate youth about the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers and streams.

Further discussions of the strengths of the meaningful Bay and stream outdoor experience included: the ease with which environmental education can be integrated into states' standards of learning; the good partnerships which exist among schools, government agencies and organizations; and the sources of funding for implementing meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experiences that could be more fully utilized.

Note: All presentations are available online at www.chesapeakebay.net/ewg.htm

STRATEGIES

After reflecting on achievements, summit participants discussed strategies for achieving the *Chesapeake 2000* goal of providing every student with a meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience by 2005. Areas that present challenges include: getting teachers out of classrooms (teacher and personnel training); lack of funding (budget cuts have led to decreased morale); tracking (finding out which children are not being provided with a meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience); lack of administrative support within the school systems; mandates that limit the scope of subjects teachers can present, such as the No Child Left Behind Act; and combating negative perceptions of environmental education. To overcome such issues, participants suggestions focused in several areas: marketing, quality control, funding, tracking and a teachers' Web site.

Note: A summary of these discussions is available online at www.chesapeakebay.net/ewg.htm

In response to the discussions that took place at the summit, the Education Workgroup has created five Education Workgroup Teams that will take action on the issues presented. These teams are: the Marketing Team, Evaluation Team, Tracking Team, Web Site Team and Funding Team. The teams are made up of both Education Workgroup members and non-members who have an interest in the subject. The teams will meet as needed to work toward the goals of their specific team and will report their progress to the Education Workgroup. These teams will further the goal of providing students in the Chesapeake Bay watershed with meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experiences by 2005.

Marketing Team

The Education Workgroup needs to market the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience and implementation support to educators. The Marketing Team will also provide a system for disseminating information regarding Education Workgroup activities and implementation support in the future.

Suggested/ Potential Action Ideas from Summit discussions:

- Market the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience to school administrators and principals, as well as teachers and parents.
- Provide a meaningful Bay experience “kit” that draws on the best and brightest programs from throughout the watershed.

Evaluation Team

The Evaluation Team would help ensure the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience programs implemented improve student achievement and environmental stewardship. The Evaluation Team would help the Education Workgroup to identify environmental education programs that meet the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience guidelines.

Suggested/ Potential Action Ideas from Summit discussions:

- Emphasize research that shows that environmental education improves student achievement. Link environmental education to the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience.
- Integrate the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience into classroom lessons by marrying it with the already existing state curriculum, standards of learning and federal mandates.
- Get feedback from teachers and youth through evaluations.
- Expand teacher training by having mentors or teachers who receive teacher training in turn train other teachers.

Tracking Team

The Tracking Team needs to create a tracking system or method of compiling comparable data from each jurisdiction so that the Education Workgroup can demonstrate the successes in implementing the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience with concrete numbers. The Tracking Team also needs to determine decisively which school districts are receiving the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience and which areas are not getting the coverage they need.

Suggested/ Potential Action Ideas from Summit discussions:

- Help the states to track the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience in each school district.
- Create a method to compile comparable data from each jurisdiction.
- Make it easy for teachers to determine if their programs pass the test for a meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience.

Funding Team

The Education Workgroup needs to help make it easier for teachers to receive funding to implement meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experiences. The Funding Team should identify new and existing resources and make sure that educators are aware of these sources of funding. The team should also help make grant writing and grant distribution more convenient for teachers.

Suggested/ Potential Action Ideas from Summit discussions:

- Look to opportunities in the private sector for increased funding.
- Take better advantage of existing resources.
- Coordinate grant writing and the distribution of small grants.
- The non-governmental organizations asked to include that they will work to develop more political support for the meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience.

Teacher's Bay Education Web Site Team

To help meet the goal of providing every student in the watershed with a meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience by 2005, teachers should be able to quickly access information on how to conduct a meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience with their class, including ways to do so inexpensively. The site should also identify funding resources available for implementing a meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience. It should also provide access to high quality lessons that are based on state standards.

These teams welcome the participation of anyone interested to work in these focus areas. For more information contact Shannon Sprague (Shannon.Sprague@noaa.gov, 410-267-5664) or Merriam Norris (Mnorris@chesapeakebay.net, 410-267-5722.)

CONCLUSION

The 2003 Chesapeake Bay Education Summit fulfilled the goal of creating a strategy that will guide the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup to meet its *Chesapeake 2000* commitments. The summit emphasized the commitment to provide all students in the watershed with a meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience by 2005. The strategy focuses on the areas of marketing, quality control, funding, tracking and a Web site. The insights gained from the summit will greatly help the Education Workgroup to further their successes and to focus their energy on the areas needed to provide all students in the watershed with a meaningful Bay and stream outdoor experience.

The Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup would like to thank all summit participants for contributing their time and talents to the 2003 Chesapeake Bay Education Summit. We have come a long way in raising student achievement and making our children stewards of the environment. Please continue your active participation to further our success in Chesapeake Bay and watershed education.