

Schools Management Strategy

Introduction

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that children aged 8 to 18 spend more than 53 hours a week online or in front of electronic media, which equals around seven-and-a-half hours a day. Richard Louv argues in his 2005 book *Last Child in the Woods* that because children are spending less time outdoors, American children suffer from “nature deficit disorder”—or a disconnect from nature. Budget cuts and testing mandates can result in schools perpetuating the disconnect from nature by limiting recess, scaling back off-site field experiences, and restricting the use of school grounds for teaching. This loss of contact with the outdoors may ultimately lead to a citizenry with no physical and emotional connection to the natural world and no desire to actively take part in protection and restoration efforts.]

Goal, Outcome and Baseline

This management strategy identifies approaches for achieving the following goal and outcome:

Environmental Literacy Goal:

Enable every student in the region to graduate with the knowledge and skills to act responsibly to protect and restore their local watershed.

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.

Baseline and Current Condition

The Environmental Literacy Goal and Outcomes build on the work begun to advance the Mid Atlantic Elementary and Secondary Environmental Literacy Strategy, which was developed in support of Presidential Executive Order 13508 to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay.

Progress under the Sustainable Schools Outcome is available at

<http://www.chesapeakeprogress.com/engaged-communities/sustainable-schools>

Participating Partners

The following partners have participated in the development of this strategy.

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement Signatories

- State of Delaware
- District of Columbia
- State of Maryland
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- Commonwealth of Virginia
- Chesapeake Bay Commission
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Other Key Participants

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- National Wildlife Federation
- Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education

Local Engagement

While states have the primary responsibility to advance the Chesapeake Bay Program's environmental literacy efforts, this work is done in partnership with local education agencies or school districts. In most watershed jurisdictions, local education agencies are responsible for defining their own curriculums and implementation strategies to support state standards and priorities.

Factors Influencing Success

The following are natural and human factors that influence the Chesapeake Bay Program's ability to attain this outcome:

State Agency and Partner Coordination

EPA meets with states yearly to encourage regular coordination meetings of state agencies involved in sustainable school activities. The Environmental Literacy Taskforce convenes state Sustainable School leaders for planning, sharing and report-outs bi-annually.

Local Education Agency Support

Education is largely controlled by school districts, each with their own leadership and management structure. With the exception of state laws and regulations, education priorities are largely determined at the local level and may not mirror state priorities. In addition, many facets of school sustainability (environmental performance, health and wellness, etc.) rest within disparate departments within a school district. Architects, school nurses, building managers, and others who might influence different facets of school sustainability are traditionally underrepresented in discussions about sustainable school efforts.

Aligning with Education Reform

This is a time of tremendous change in education for many of the watershed jurisdictions. While national education reform efforts including STEM, Common Core, and Next Generation Science Standards lend themselves to using the environment as an integrating context for learning, the extensive efforts to support and implement the necessary shifts in teaching and learning required by these reforms pose ongoing challenges to systemic approaches to environmental education. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Program has organized the thinking and incentivized the development of sustainable schools.

School community (teachers, principals, staff, or parents) awareness and readiness is uneven. Often the interest in creating a sustainable school is due to the leadership of an individual

parent, teacher, administrator or even student. It is difficult to sustain a robust sustainable schools program lead by only one individual, it is therefore critical to create understanding among the entire school community about the systemic importance of supporting sustainable school efforts and benefits to be gained.

Funding to Support Student Experiences and Sustainable School Projects

A major limiting factor is funding for sustainable school initiatives. Few local education agencies in the Bay have designated budgets for sustainable schools and only several school districts/divisions have Directors of Sustainability. Funding is most often secured from grants or donations by at individual schools for specific projects, which makes it difficult to have a comprehensive ongoing program. NOAA through the Chesapeake Bay Trust has been a significant contributor to sustainable school projects throughout the Bay area. Members of the Environmental Literacy Workgroup use their network to share information on available funding as it is available.

Current Efforts and Gaps

The federal government plays an important role in advancing environmental education in the region. For instance, the EPA has been working with all Bay States and Jurisdictions to better understand and coordinate sustainable school efforts in the region with a particular focus on Healthy Schools.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) works with partners to plan and implement habitat projects on school grounds and at environmental education centers. The U.S. EPA Region 3 works with jurisdictions to adopt the EPA “Guidelines for States: Development and Implementation of a School Environmental Health Program and School Siting Guidelines. The federal government also provides critical funding to support model programs through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Environmental Education grant program, the NOAA Bay Watershed Education & Training (B-WET) Program, and the NOAA Environmental Literacy Grant Program. Additionally, the National Park Service (NPS) has expanded access to rivers, streams and open spaces for students, teachers and the general public and periodically provides grants to support the use of NPS and partner sites by school groups.

The sustainable schools effort at the Bay Program helps to support the pillars of the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School award program, which recognizes schools and school districts. Departments of Education in individual states may choose to participate in this recognition program by holding a competition within their state in which schools and districts apply addressing the U.S. Green Ribbon School framework. States then nominate the top schools and districts for the award. Since the award began in 2012, each state in the watershed has participated at least one year. Sustainable Schools is an exciting new area of growth for the Bay Program and more work will need to be conducted to better understand the gaps. An Action Team for Sustainable Schools has been established under the Education Workgroup to help guide this work.

Promoting sustainable schools at the state level is a pathway to establish or implement plans to increase environmental literacy among students. These efforts often take different forms from formal environmental literacy plans to partnerships for children in nature to state strategies to support sustainable schools. In support of the development of these efforts, several states conducted formal needs assessments to help guide the work. Additional examples of recent state commitments to environmental education and sustainable schools are as follows:

The State of Delaware Department of Education and Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, partners with Green Build United and Delaware Nature Society to hold sustainable school workshops, conduct outreach and recognition ceremonies. Green Build United and the Delaware Sustainable Energy Utility to promote Delaware's Pathways to Green Schools.

In 2010, the Council of the District of Columbia signed into law the Healthy Schools Act of 2010, which sets up requirements to help the D.C. school system go green. It establishes an environmental programs within the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization, which will: run recycling, energy reduction, and integrated pest management programs at DCPS schools; test drinking water for lead; make sure schools comply with EPA standards for indoor air quality and lead removal; encourage more environmentally-friendly practices in building construction, school meals, and school cleaning procedures. The Healthy Schools Act requires that the District 1. Establish an environmental literacy plan for DCPS and public charter schools. 2. Establish a School Gardens Program within OSSE and assist schools in receiving certification as U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools. 3. Meet LEED Gold Level certification for school buildings whenever possible, new and renovated buildings should be green, according to LEED. The District accomplishes many of these goals via collaboration with outside organizations such as the Department of General Services and non-profits.

Much of the Sustainable Schools work in Maryland is accomplished by the Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Educators (MAEOE) in collaboration with partners throughout the state. MAEOE administers the Maryland Green Schools program and Green School Centers in which over 500 Maryland school participate. They also partner and with and recognize the National Wildlife Federation Eco-Schools. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources coordinates the Green Classroom Project addressing the question "Does every child in Maryland have the means, access, opportunity, knowledge, support, encouragement, desire, and inclination to play, explore and learn outdoors – both during and outside of the school day?"

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has a collaborative sustainable school effort which brings together partners from around the state to transform their schools launched on April 22, 2015 and known as the Pennsylvania Green and Healthy Schools Partnership (PGHSP). The Partnership hosts the State Annual Green Ribbon Schools awards and promotes NWF Eco-Schools as a pathway to green schools. The Green Ribbon Schools Awards program is managed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education with support from the Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Environmental Protection.

The Virginia Resource-Use Education Council (VRUEC), a long-standing (1952) non-profit, education body, serves as a primary hub for communications and environmental education coordination. Most recently, state agencies in the VRUEC were charged, via Executive Order 42 (Governor Terry McAuliffe, April 2015), to develop recognition programs for school-based conservation and environmental stewardship efforts and achievements. The Virginia Department of Education coordinates the Green Ribbon Award promotion and application process. Other Commonwealth efforts which promote sustainable schools are: the Virginia Naturally Recognition Program recognizes schools for incorporating the environment into their curriculum, conducting energy and water audits as well as establishing an outdoor classroom. The Virginia School Board Association, Green Schools Challenge is a friendly competition designed to encourage implementation of specific environmental policies and practical actions that reduce the carbon emissions generated by both the local school division and the broader community. School Divisions can become a certified "Green School Division." Many of these actions can save local school divisions money. In the Green Schools Challenge the USGBC Greater Virginia chapter challenges K-12 schools across the Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia regions to develop and implement the most creative, effective, no or low cost sustainable practices for their schools. Schools are matched with volunteer mentors to help guide project development and implementation resulting in greater environmental understanding for students and reducing operating costs.

The WV Department of Education (WVDE) administers the WV Sustainable Schools award program and promotion and participation in the federal Green Ribbon Schools program. WV Sustainable Schools is a recognition program for schools that exemplify a commitment to sustainable practices in the facilities as well as integrate those practices into the curriculum and community. All public and private schools in West Virginia will be invited to apply for this state and national recognition.

In addition, nonprofit providers are often the primary organizations advocating for and supporting these efforts in schools. National, regional, state, and local nonprofits support the environmental literacy outcomes by partnering with school systems to plan for environmental literacy programs, provide student Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs), and offer professional development opportunities for teachers. These organizations also provide valuable tools for student data collection on school grounds and in the field, such as the National Geographic FieldScope project. Nonprofits are also often the organizations that provide certifications for sustainable schools' efforts, which include the National Wildlife Federation EcoSchools Program and the MAEOE Green School certification. Without these important partners, the environmental literacy outcomes under this agreement could not be reached.

Actions, Tools and Support to Empower Local Government and Others

Ultimately, educating students is a local endeavor with the work and the accountability at the school system and even the school building level. For this reason, the more than 500 local education agencies in the region are extremely important partners in this work. The results of a 2014-2015 survey will help the states and Chesapeake Bay Program to better understand the

current status of local environmental literacy efforts across the watershed, including the geographic distribution of Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) and sustainable school implementation by local education agencies.

This will inform the priorities of the Workgroup and revisions to the management strategy.

Management Approaches

The Chesapeake Bay Program will work together to carry out the following actions and strategies to achieve the Environmental Literacy Goal and Outcomes. These approaches seek to address the factors affecting our ability to meet the goal and the gaps identified above. Work will be coordinated through the Education Workgroup of the Chesapeake Bay Program, which provides a forum for cross-jurisdictional coordination and support on all aspects of environmental education. For Sustainable Schools, a team has formed working under the auspices of the Education Workgroup to engage a broader group of stakeholders, explore areas of regional collaboration, and identify specific actions the Bay Program can take to achieve this outcome. The team is led by staff from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It includes individuals from state agencies, local education agencies, and non-profit organizations. These team will work towards shared priorities as follows:

Management Approach 1: Strengthen and coordinate sustainable school state certification and recognition programs consistent with high-quality, recognized criteria such as the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School program.

Management Approach 2: Broaden stakeholder engagement beyond environmental literacy constituents to broaden awareness, build partnerships, and increase support.

Management Approach 3: Identify and disseminate sustainable schools information and resources to school districts and schools.

Cross Outcome Collaboration and Multiple Benefits

Future work for this management strategy will include coordination with all related goals and outcomes, including Water Quality and the Diversity Action Team. The resulting work will be captured in action plans.

Monitoring and Assessing Progress

Progress for achieving the sustainable schools outcome is available at

<http://www.chesapeakeprogress.com/engaged-communities/sustainable-schools>

Adaptively Managing

The Leadership Team of the Education Workgroup, which is chaired by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and includes federal representatives from the U.S. Forest Service and the Environmental Protection Agency along with two representatives per state (generally from the state departments of education and lead natural resource agencies) and key partner organizations, convenes monthly to discuss

priorities and progress towards meeting the Environmental Literacy Goals and Outcomes. The full Education Workgroup, which includes broader representation from federal agencies, state agencies, nonprofits, local education agencies, and others, meets several times a year. The group also convenes an Environmental Literacy Forum every two years around specific issues or priorities, which include outside experts and constituents. These Summits serve as good opportunities to re-assess where the group is in achieving the outcomes of the agreement and adjusting strategies as appropriate.

In addition, the Principals Staffing Committee of the Chesapeake Bay Program plans to convene high-level leaders from throughout the Bay Partnership to discuss progress towards meeting the Environmental Literacy goal and outcomes. These meetings will include State Superintendents of Education as well as leaders from state natural resource agencies, U.S. Department of Education, NOAA, U.S. EPA, national and regional nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, local education agencies, Chesapeake Bay Commission, and the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup. The Management Board will be responsible for tracking the agreements and commitments generated by these meetings.

Biennial Workplan

A 2018-2019 biennial workplan is available that outlines work towards this outcome where appropriate, state-specific commitments are listed as performance targets.