

Chesapeake Bay Program Education Initiative (98-1)

The future well-being of North America's largest and most productive estuary, the Chesapeake Bay, its thousands of tributaries and its 64,000 square miles of watershed will soon rest in the hands of its youngest citizens. These citizens, three and a half million strong in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, are tomorrow's leaders. They also will be the stewards of the watershed's precious resources including its fish, crabs and oysters, forests and wetlands.

As the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership, we acknowledge our responsibility to ensure that these future caretakers graduate with the knowledge and skills to act responsibly to protect and restore their local watershed and the broader Chesapeake watershed ecosystem. We acknowledge our duty to impart to these young people a sense of individual responsibility and our hope that they develop the skills to form a personal ethic regarding the natural world. Further, we acknowledge that the Chesapeake Bay, its rivers and its watershed provide an authentic, locally-relevant source of environmental information and data that should be used to help advance student learning skills and problem-solving abilities across the entire school curriculum.

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The Environmental Literacy goal and outcomes of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement establish the broad expectations for this shared work. Since this directive was initially set in place in 1998, States, local school districts, and partners have made tremendous progress in establishing curriculum, policies, and model programs that advance environmental literacy. Nevertheless, even with good policies and programs in place, we recognize that there is a need to continue to more fully embed environmental education into formal educational efforts. As the Bay Program, we want to forge this connection by creating stronger links between partners at all levels, connecting state and local education agencies with federal funding opportunities for environmental literacy activities, and encouraging the continued development of policies and programs that advance environmental literacy at the state and local level.

Finally, we recognize that while the educational community's tradition of independence is strongly held, there is an increased need today to engage in new partnerships to get the job done.

Therefore to further our commitments, the Chesapeake Bay Program will:

- Encourage the State Departments of Education in each jurisdiction- Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, and West Virginia and the District of Columbia- to become more active partners in the Bay Program.
 - Each Department of Education is encouraged to send senior level representatives to biennial Management Board meetings focused on progress towards meeting the Environmental Literacy outcomes of the Chesapeake Bay

Watershed Agreement and quarterly Principal Staffing Committee meetings to discuss items of concern to their Governor.

- Each Department of Education is encouraged to summarize annually, for its Chesapeake Executive Council member, ongoing educational programs in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade that support Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration and protection efforts beginning in 2017, prior to the Executive Council meeting.
- Each Department of Education is encouraged to increase the involvement of students in educational programs which support Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration and protection efforts. Existing youth groups and forums should be involved and new groups created when necessary.
- Support an existing or newly-created interagency education group in each jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction's group will work to further its own programs and to champion the efforts, goals and objectives of the Chesapeake Bay Program. Each interagency education group will report annually on its progress and problems to its Department of Education, beginning in 2017/1999. Each Department of Education should include the interagency group's annual report in its own annual report to the Executive Council. The interagency group in each jurisdiction should include as members at least:
 - A representative of the Chesapeake Bay Program
 - Representatives of the education, environment, agriculture and natural resource agencies
 - Teachers
 - Representatives of private nonprofit organizations involved in environmental or informal education
 - A representative of higher education
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- Convene an Education Summit of the leadership from State Departments of Education in each jurisdiction in 2017 and every two years thereafter. The outcomes of the Education Summit will be reported to the Executive Council at its annual meeting. Education Summits should also include the leadership of State natural resource and environmental agencies, the U.S. Department of Education, NOAA, local education agency leaders, members of the Interagency education group cited above, and address progress and metrics towards meeting the Environmental Literacy goal and outcomes of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, including (1) student meaningful watershed educational experiences for students in elementary, middle, and high school, (2) sustainable schools, and (3) policy and metrics to support environmental literacy.
- Maintain the Education Workgroup under the Citizen Stewardship Goal Implementation Team, which should include representatives from each of the four interagency education groups and other federal, state, and local officials, teachers, and students where appropriate.