



Chesapeake Bay Program
SCIENCE • RESTORATION • PARTNERSHIP

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MID-ATLANTIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY STRATEGY

Executive Summary



Managers are making tremendous progress identifying and tackling environmental issues facing the Chesapeake Bay. However, many of the remaining challenges to a healthier ecosystem are complex, diffuse, and directly in the hands of citizens, including energy use, automobile emissions, and urban and suburban runoff. These issues force individuals, businesses, and communities to make hard decisions, and require a thoughtful public engagement strategy that begins in the schools with our youngest citizens.

The Mid Atlantic Elementary and Secondary Environmental Literacy Strategy draws on the full strength of the federal government to support state efforts to transform their schools to provide the next generation of citizen stewards the knowledge and skills they need to make informed environmental decisions.

It builds upon the long history of federal-state cooperation of the Chesapeake Bay Program to create a model that showcases how the federal government can support and influence sophisticated state environmental education efforts, which is important because of the highly localized nature of pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade (PK-12) education.

The strategy calls upon federal, state, and nongovernmental partners to advance shared priorities in four key areas—students, educators, schools, and the environmental education community. Together, these partners have the vision, expertise, and resources to create and support schools that foster citizen stewardship and graduate environmentally literate students.

GOAL 1: Every student in the region graduates with the knowledge and skills to make informed environmental decisions.

Outcome 1.1: States engage students at every grade level in outdoor activities designed to increase environmental literacy.

Outcome 1.2: Students participate in interdisciplinary and scaffolded instruction about the key relationships between dynamic earth, energy, and human systems, including STEM content knowledge and thinking skills.

Outcome 1.3: Students have information about career opportunities and requisite skills for environment-based jobs and the opportunity to participate in programs that prepare them for a future in these careers.

Outcome 1.4: Students have the opportunity to pursue enrichment programs and experiences that support in depth understanding of environmental issues and solutions.

GOAL 2: All educators in the region responsible for instruction about or in the environment are provided with sustained professional development, tools, and resources that support their role in providing students with high-quality environmental education.

Outcome 2.1: Educators have access to high-quality, curriculum-based lesson plans, resources, and information on training opportunities that focus on environmental issues for all grade levels and subjects.

Outcome 2.2: Teachers have sustained professional development related to environmental education content, outdoor learning strategies, and pedagogy to promote environmental literacy in their students.

Outcome 2.3: Pre-service teachers enter the workforce with knowledge and experience in interdisciplinary environmental education content, outdoor learning strategies, and pedagogy.

Outcome 2.4: Informal environmental educators in the region understand and can communicate current scientific findings and have knowledge of research-based environmental education best practices.

Outcome 2.5: Federal, state, and local natural resource personnel are actively engaged in environmental education and outreach and have adequate training in instructional techniques and the needs of educational audiences.

GOAL 3: Every school in the region maintains its buildings, grounds, and operations to support positive environmental and human health outcomes.

Outcome 3.1: School buildings, grounds, and operations are models of sustainability for the community, making continual progress towards net-zero environmental impacts, including carbon, solid waste, wildlife habitat, and hazardous waste.

Outcome 3.2: The school environment has a positive effect on the health of students, staff, and the surrounding community.

GOAL 4: The education community in the region functions in a unified manner and coordinates with key national, regional, and state programs to represent the full suite of information and opportunities available for PK-12 audiences.

Outcome 4.1: States in the mid-Atlantic establish and implement a robust plan for ensuring that all students graduate environmentally literate.

Outcome 4.2: Education programs are developed and refined using the best available research on the effectiveness of environmental education, and support continued research in this field.

Outcome 4.3: Federal, state, and nongovernmental organizations with PK-12 programs actively communicate to increase collaboration related to environmental literacy planning and implementation.

