

QUARTERLY PROGRESS MEETING – May, 2022
Chesapeake Bay Program



Sustainable Schools

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Through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, the Chesapeake Bay Program has committed to...

Goal: Environmental Literacy

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.



*Students from Queen Anne's County High School in Centreville, Md., look for macroinvertebrates in a stream during an environmental education activity.
(Photo courtesy of Suzanne Sullivan/ShoreRivers)*

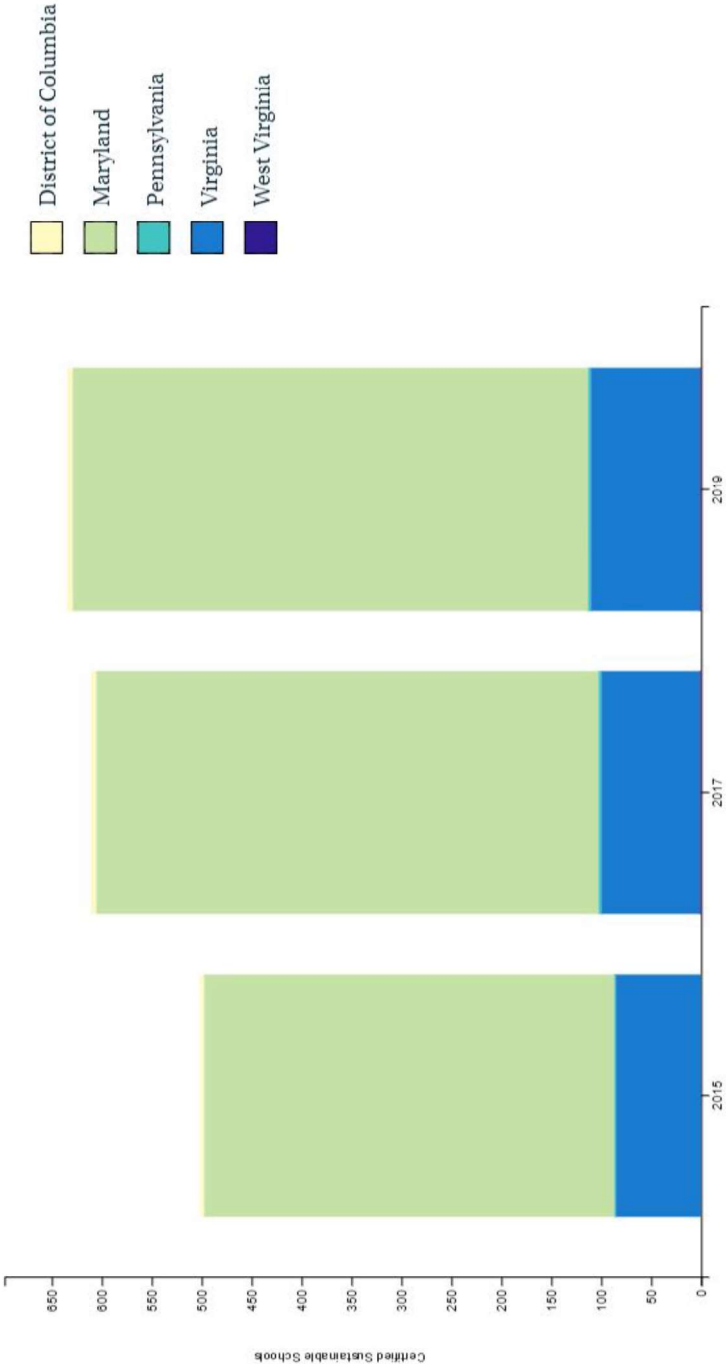


Certified Sustainable Schools in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed (2015-2019)

Certified sustainable public and charter schools have been recognized by the following programs: U.S. Green Ribbon Schools, National Wildlife Federation Eco-Schools USA, Md. Green Schools, Pa. Pathways to Green Schools and Va. Naturally Schools.

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| Year | District of Columbia | Maryland | Pennsylvania | Virginia | West Virginia |
|------|----------------------|----------|--------------|----------|---------------|
| 2015 | 4 | 410 | 1 | 86 | 0 |
| 2017 | 5 | 503 | 2 | 99 | 1 |
| 2019 | 5 | 516 | 2 | 110 | 1 |

3 pillars of the U.S. Department of Ed Green Ribbon Schools award:

1. reduce environmental impact and costs;
2. improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff; and
3. provide effective environmental and sustainability education





Learn

*What have we learned in the last
two years?*



Successes and Challenges



What Worked:

- + Increased recognition of the benefits of outdoor learning
- + More conversations related to climate change as a result of being outdoors

What Didn't Work:

- School closures/ reopenings have halted or slowed student involvement in sustainable school activities
- Sustainability projects seen as “extras”
- Increase in disposable items (ex. lunch trays, water bottles, and facemasks)



On the Horizon

What is impacting our progress?

Policy Impacts:

- MD: smaller grants have supported school composting projects
- WV: reopened website to accept “Green Ribbon Schools” applications
- PA: expanded recognition levels for schools and institutions (ex. DEIJ, agriculture education, curriculum integration, etc.)
- NAAEE issued “Guide to Advocating for Outdoor Classrooms in Coronavirus-Era School Reopening.”



Looking Back/ On the Horizon



Scientific Impacts:

- Heightened attention on the health benefits associated with outdoor learning

Fiscal Impacts:

- New funding resources (ex. ESSER) used to improve school infrastructure *sometimes* used to facilitate outdoor learning



A

Adapt

How does all of this impact our work?



Based on what we learned, we plan to ...

- Administer ELIT Survey; Data Update to Chesapeake Progress
 - *Watershed-wide, anticipate that the # of Sustainable Schools will be maintained/ slightly decreased due to COVID-19 challenges and program changes*
- Return to sustainability projects
- Focus on connection between outdoor learning and social-emotional learning (SEL)
- Strategically engage additional resources coming from Biden Administration (ex. Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, various EOs, Action Plan for Building Better School Infrastructure)



Equitable and inclusive restoration ...

- Prioritize sustainable school efforts in all schools, with emphasis on schools in underserved communities
- Determine how to incorporate data related to health disparities and social determinants of health
- Promote sustainability projects, create healthier learning environments, make connections to env. literacy and green jobs...while reducing costs and creating savings
- Align with environmental justice and climate change priorities



Awareness

What do we want you to know?

- Continue to look for opportunities to apply for and spend Bipartisan Infrastructure Law \$\$\$ to create healthier schools.
 - *Example: Schools with their own water systems can apply for EPA WIIN (the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation) grants. Where are these schools?*
 - *Example: EPA's Clean School Bus Program (\$5B over next 5 yrs)*
- Assist with White House's "Action Plan for Building Better School Infrastructure" to upgrade public schools with modern, clean, energy efficient facilities and transportation
 - *Under this Action Plan, the Department of Education is proposing a new Office of Infrastructure and Sustainability, as part of the President's FY2023 Budget - help make connections!*
- Support new "No Child Left Inside Act," co-authored by MD Congressman Sarbanes, could provide \$150M annually thru 2027



Sustainable Schools Discussion

Given the expected funding increase and potential for new legislation to improve school infrastructure and enhanced EE...

How can we get ahead? What resources would be useful for you and the stakeholders with whom you work?