

## **2023 Environmental Literacy Summit – Key Takeaways**

### **About the 2023 Environmental Literacy Summit:**

The Environmental Literacy Summit is a biennial event engaging leadership from Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions in action-oriented conversations focused on achieving the [Environmental Literacy Goal](#) of the [Chesapeake Bay Agreement](#). This year's Summit was especially significant as Chesapeake Bay Program stakeholders are starting to consider what the future of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement will look like.

This year we convened the Summit on November 1st and highlighted important ideas around high-impact actions schools can take to address the climate crisis and workforce development programming that supports learners in developing the skills and competencies needed to implement the strategies that will address climate change issues and support sustainability broadly. We hope that this Summit encourages states to take immediate action and think strategically about goals that they can commit to, towards a shared climate education vision.

### **Themes:**

#### **Building Green Career Pathways:**

Economic security is predicated upon environmental as well as public health. More than ever, students want to make a positive contribution to their communities and society. Environmental work and sustainability are central to this interest. This means every job in our economy has the potential to be a green job. The way we will be successful in supporting this orientation is through a strong partnership between the environmental literacy community and workforce preparation programs, especially when student programming connects environmental learning with the application of career skills and competencies to real-world problems through classroom and work-based learning opportunities. How we approach this work will look different in each state but, when done correctly, every job becomes a green job and every green job has the potential to be a good job.

#### **High-Impact Actions for Sustainable Schools:**

The Chesapeake Bay Program's Education Workgroup's efforts around sustainable schools to date have largely centered around state and federal certification programs and the creation of school grounds for learning. This year's Summit elevated the conversation around "high-impact actions" for sustainable schools to focus on three aspects that have the greatest potential to address the climate crisis: clean energy, sustainable food use, and non-fossil fuel transportation. The [K12](#)

[Climate Action Plan](#) developed by the Aspen Institute’s “This is Planet ED” initiative describes it best: “ If all the schools in the U.S. were to shift to clean energy, sustainable food use, and non-fossil fuel transportation over the next decade, we will have successfully transitioned one of the largest public sectors impacting the environment. And what makes schools especially impactful is the potential for them to transition to sustainability while educating their students, helping prepare youth to confront the climate challenges of the future.” – [K12 Climate Action](#). Specifically, “Energy is the second highest cost for many school districts, behind salaries. So it’s also a substantial cost for school districts. Our schools operate the largest mass transit fleet in the country, with 480,000 school buses. Our schools serve seven billion meals annually. And all of those things add up to a sizable carbon footprint.” Substantial federal funding opportunities are available for schools and school districts to take advantage of to work towards these goals.

[LINK](#)

## **State Summaries**

### **Delaware:**

- Overall Takeaways
  - What are your state’s aspirations for this work over the next 10 years?
    - There is a regulation that requires EE/ELIT to be taught in all Delaware Schools
    - Sustainable school principles and concepts are included in new school construction and major renovations.
  - What needs to happen in the next year to advance this work?
    - Map out what agencies and individuals have authority and funding when it comes to sustainable schools
    - Seek out champions that are on or have influence on school boards at the various districts
    - Develop communications materials on sustainable schools
    - Develop a list of SOC codes that are green jobs
  - Between one year and 10 years
    - Align ELIT to federal accountability measures such as ESSA and Perkins
    - Create school facilities staff training program
- Building Green Career Pathways
  - The Delaware delegation expressed a need to identify the appropriate Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) codes for “Green occupations” and/or ID the “bedrock” occupations already classified and if needed develop truly new workforce pathways. DE also identified the need to ensure there is reciprocity between states

for credentialing, as students. Workers move between states in the region. DE recognized that the environmental literacy community has an essential role to play in supporting awareness of green/sustainability-oriented occupations and may collaborate with career awareness programming, support work-based learning, and more.

- High-Impact Actions for Sustainable Schools
  - The DE delegation identified that at this stage in DE schools, one of the greatest needs/actions that can be taken is to establish communication pathways/relationships with DE school facilities PoCs and school board members that can support high-impact actions in schools.
- Beyond 2025
  - Regionally aligned green apprenticeships and training programs
  - Braiding of funds around identified occupations
  - MWEE in middle grades and high school CTE

## **Maryland:**

### [Link to breakout \(session 1\) notes](#)

- Overall Takeaways
  - What are your state's aspirations for this work over the next 10 years?
    - Increase the adoption of sustainable school best practices by LEAs
    - Leverage environmental literacy to support workforce development in green careers
  - What needs to happen in the next year to advance this work?
    - Increased coordination between Project Green Classrooms and the Interagency Commission on School Construction
    - Explore opportunities for state agencies to host interns and apprenticeships to support the Blueprint for Maryland's Future
- Building Green Career Pathways
  - Over the next 10 years Maryland is the epitome of collaboration:
    - Education and employee representatives regularly convene to provide models for scaling skills. A multi-tiered buy-in is vital for success:
    - State Level: Green initiatives within public infrastructures are prioritized.
    - Federal: Support is sought for programs like food sharing.
    - Business: The role of the private sector is under development, hinting at opportunities for increased partnership.

- Community: Active engagement is key, especially in the domains of environmental awareness and technical education pathways.
  - To build on this collaboration, a roadmap for the next year would involve:
    - Simplifying pathways for stakeholder clarity.
    - Ensuring pathways are both reflective and inclusive.
    - Highlighting the design of systems and not just sectors to ensure better transferability of skills.
    - Creating cross-divisional collaborative communities at state agencies.
- High-Impact Actions for Sustainable Schools
  - Over the next 10 years:
    - Local education agencies feel empowered and resourced to implement high-impact actions in school buildings/ on school grounds. Especially when partnering with the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) for funding
    - There's a stronger connection between the sustainability efforts of facilities staff and environmental literacy efforts within a school
  - Over the next year:
    - Strengthen the relationship between Project Green Classrooms and the IAC through a meeting to determine shared priorities.
      - Potential collaboration between PGC and IAC:
        - develop guidance for LEAs on how to incorporate sustainability best practices into RFPs for school construction and renovation
        - IAC member on PGC steering committee
    - Convene facilities staff and environmental literacy staff from LEAs for a conversation about linking sustainability efforts to environmental education/ climate education (tie to Environmental Literacy framework from MSDE)
- Beyond 2025
  - Expand the Watershed Agreement to include environmental literacy outside the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE)
  - Incorporate climate education
  - Infuse DEIJ language into the Education Goal

## Pennsylvania:

- Overall Takeaways
  - What are your state's aspirations for this work over the next 10 years?
    - **Elevate Environmental Literacy and Sustainability work within PA Dept of Education to the same level as STEM and Agriculture**
  - What needs to happen in the next year to advance this work?
    - [Remake Learning Days](#) - **use this** to highlight success stories across the state (sustainable school efforts and CTE goals) and share funding opportunities
      - **Career Ready PA Backpack Challenge** - funding opportunity for schools
      - **Share MWEE programs**
- Building Green Career Pathways
  - Instead of a green careers pathways program of study, **we need environmental literacy to be integrated across all career clusters and programs of study.**
    - **Systematizing Environmental Literacy competencies for all CTE programs** so students understand the impact of the products they use and make.
  - **ID Industry Recognized Credentials for green careers** (i.e. solar installer, green water infrastructure) -
    - Apprenticeship and Training Office - the quickest way to industries
  - **Align [DCNR's Outdoor Corps](#) experience with other work skills/certifications (marketable skills) relevant to the industry and supportive of advanced degrees**
- High-Impact Actions for Sustainable Schools
  - **Act 45 (Administrative) Professional Development for Environmental Literacy and Sustainable Development** - This course connects Administration with Facilities
  - The footprint area of our schools is massive, we need to make a concerted effort to **get all our schools thinking about becoming more sustainable**
    - **To make efforts easier, the IU could hold contracts for schools to access to make changes to become a green ribbon school**
  - **Specific funding for schools in Environmental Justice areas** - Health and Wellness, School Safety, Facilities, Transportation
- Beyond 2025
  - **Consider a Mid-Atlantic Regional Economy** and a strategy for all of these states to come around. Transferable industry-led credentials in the green economy. **Needing to engage with the Departments of Labor.**

## Virginia:

- Overall Takeaways
  - What are your state's aspirations for this work over the next 10 years?
    - All students in Virginia graduate environmentally literate, supported by school divisions that have the vision, resources, and capacity to ensure this.
    - Building the green workforce in Virginia. Doing this by building green job awareness and training into MWEEs, CTE programs, and other instructional content.
    - Develop a task force to examine CTE courses & highlight where environmental theses/ aspects can be emphasized;
 

NOTES 12/4/2023: Prince William County has already been doing this; competencies for MS courses; listing courses with competencies that directly relate to Env literacy (Melinda & Jeanne); Melinda will be sharing PWCPS ELit work at one of the CB B-WET MWEE Practitioner webinars; PWCPS is an exemplar

Link to PWCPS ELit Plan:  
[https://www.pwcs.edu/departments/facilities/planning\\_\\_\\_financial/energy\\_\\_\\_sustainability/education/environmental\\_literacy\\_plan](https://www.pwcs.edu/departments/facilities/planning___financial/energy___sustainability/education/environmental_literacy_plan)

EE providers can create and offer internships for HS students; contact Assistant Principals about these opportunities to help meet graduation expectation requirements; career fairs; division level CTE, too; VDOE now has a regional CTE representative (regional hub task)
  - What needs to happen in the next year to advance this work?
    - Ensure that green careers/workforce development is incorporated into the new Environmental Literacy Strategic Plan.
    - Expand partnerships in both the green career pathways and sustainable schools spaces.
- Building Green Career Pathways
  - VA delegation would like to explore the idea of creating a simple module on environmental literacy that could be distributed to all CTE leaders and used in ALL career pathways, building on the idea that all jobs should be green jobs.
  - We are also interested in thinking about developing a Green Career-focused MWEE, especially in the HS level.
  - As an action, DCR (Cassi) is going to connect with Dan H. from Advance CTE to better understand the opportunities for emulating the work they have started in Delaware and to ensure that CTE is integrated into the new Environmental Literacy Strategic Plan.

- High-Impact Actions for Sustainable Schools
  - Sustainable schools is still an area where the VA delegation is not representative of the “right” people to make change in this space. We need to do work to build relationships with those groups that are already engaging on this topic.
  - State leaders have already identified the need for an environmental literacy point of contact on the curriculum/instructional side of the house at each division. Given the conversation at the Summit, we’d also like to advocate for the need to have a similar role on the facilities side and make sure these people are in regular collaboration.
- Beyond 2025
  - The VA delegation discussed that while we are still very much working on having a MWEE in each of the three grade bands (elementary, middle, and high) more is needed than these three experiences for students to graduate environmentally literate. Additionally, admin/teacher turnover continues to derail environmental literacy efforts, so we are doubling down on the value that division-level environmental literacy plans can play in ensuring this continuity and creating the conditions for students to graduate with the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and intentions to protect the environment. We’re hoping to see this elevated both in the state (DCR) Environmental Literacy Strategic Plan as well as in our Beyond 2025 efforts.

## West Virginia:

- Overall Takeaways
  - What are your state’s aspirations for this work over the next 10 years?
    - Systemic Support for Teachers at a district & state level
    - Properly value youth corps programs including expanding pay & benefits to expand WHO can take these positions
  - What needs to happen in the next year to advance this work?
    - create and expand partnerships with federal entities (US DoE) & non-profits, and universities.
- Building Green Career Pathways
  - Adapt environmental literacy ideas to be relevant in existing programs
  - Incorporate environmental literacy themes into teaching standards writ large, especially in the “non-science” curriculum
  - Connect CTE to high schools where possible, and remove as many barriers to participation as possible.
- High-Impact Actions for Sustainable Schools
  - Prioritize CTE, CTE will perpetuate High Impact Actions and vice versa

- Highlight & expand successful green energy initiatives in WV
  - Calhoun County, Petersburg School has solar programs
  - Eastern Community & technical college - Renewable Energy program
  - Geothermal at a number of schools across the state
- Beyond 2025
  - Utilize a site like BayBackpack to support CTE initiatives
    - Highlight regional examples of success on the website via case studies
  - Request for CBP to provide support for a decentralized network, including network onboarding

### **District of Columbia:**

- Overall Takeaways
  - What are your state's aspirations for this work over the next 10 years?
    - Identify the transformational leader(s) who can advance environmental literacy and sustainable school priorities
    - Reach out to national offices (such as NAF) to explore integrating environmental sustainability integrated across relevant academy/certifications
  - What needs to happen in the next year to advance this work?
    - Ensure updates to the DC Environmental Literacy Plan and Sustainable DC 3.0 leverage regional goals
    - Encourage and foster partnerships to strengthen commitments to environmental literacy programming and funding for all DCPS and charter schools
- Building Green Career Pathways
  - Focus on career pathways to skills and to not oversaturate sector-specific credentials.
  - DC's CTE Plan is being revised, identify opportunities for alignment
- High-Impact Actions for Sustainable Schools
  - Explore opportunities to engage with the DME's Master Facilities Plan update
  - Identify paths to reach charter school networks to ensure they are aware of green building requirements, etc.
- Beyond 2025
  - Create a systemic environmental literacy program (e.g., Outdoor School for All in Oregon, ClimeTime in Washington) that is fully-funded by the states