

Environmental Literacy in Washington, D.C.

Why environmental literacy?

The well-being of the Chesapeake Bay watershed will soon rest in the hands of its youngest citizens: 2.7 million students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Establishing strong environmental education programs now provides a vital foundation for these future stewards.

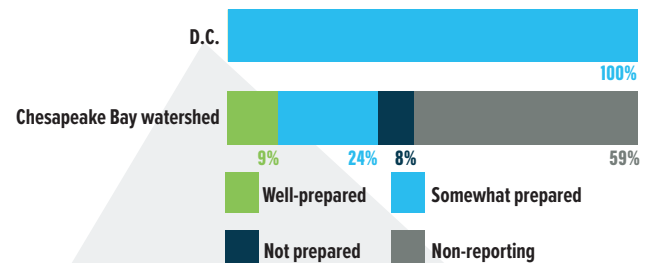
Along with Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., has committed to helping its students graduate with the knowledge and skills needed to act responsibly to protect and restore their local watersheds. They will do this through:

- **Environmental Literacy Planning:** Developing a comprehensive and systemic approach to environmental literacy for students that includes policies, practices and voluntary metrics.
- **Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs):** Continually increasing students' understanding of the watershed through participation in teacher-supported Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences and rigorous, inquiry-based instruction.
- **Sustainable Schools:** Continually increasing the number of schools that reduce the impact of their buildings and grounds on the environment and human health.

The District of Columbia is home to one school district whose public schools serve 66,000 students. The environmental literacy and MWEE data at right do not reflect charter schools.

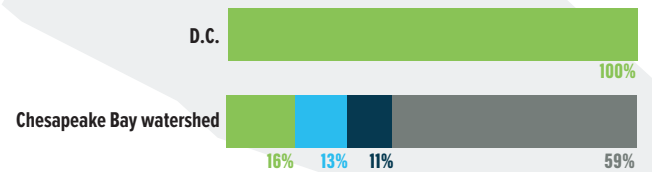
How does D.C. compare to the Chesapeake Bay watershed?

Environmental Literacy Planning: School districts' self-identified preparedness to put environmental literacy programs in place

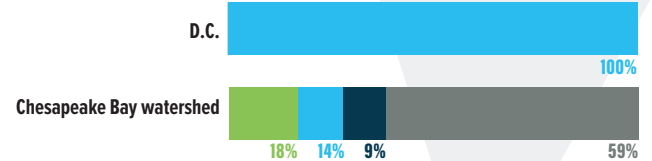


Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs): School districts that reported providing MWEEs to their students

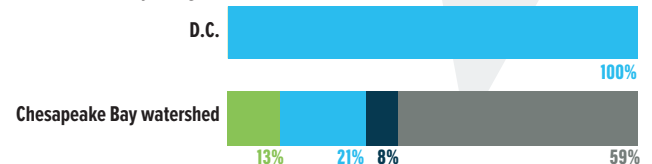
MWEE Availability in Elementary Schools



MWEE Availability in Middle Schools



MWEE Availability in High Schools



Sustainable Schools: Schools that are recognized as sustainable by U.S. Green Ribbon Schools, Eco-Schools USA, Maryland Green Schools, Pennsylvania Pathways to Green Schools or Virginia Naturally Schools



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School snapshot

At Seaton Elementary, students participate in a field trip that brings to life what they are learning in the classroom. In 2016, for the first time, fifth grade students participated in an overnight Chesapeake watershed experience. They spent three nights in the woods where they had the opportunity to spend time in nature and learn about how D.C. is connected to the Bay.

Each year, students focus on specific themes such as sun's energy, wildlife habitats or the water cycle. Along with those themes, students complete projects in the school's garden, and each grade is responsible for caring for a different aspect of the garden, such as the compost pile, the pollinator garden and the native grass area.

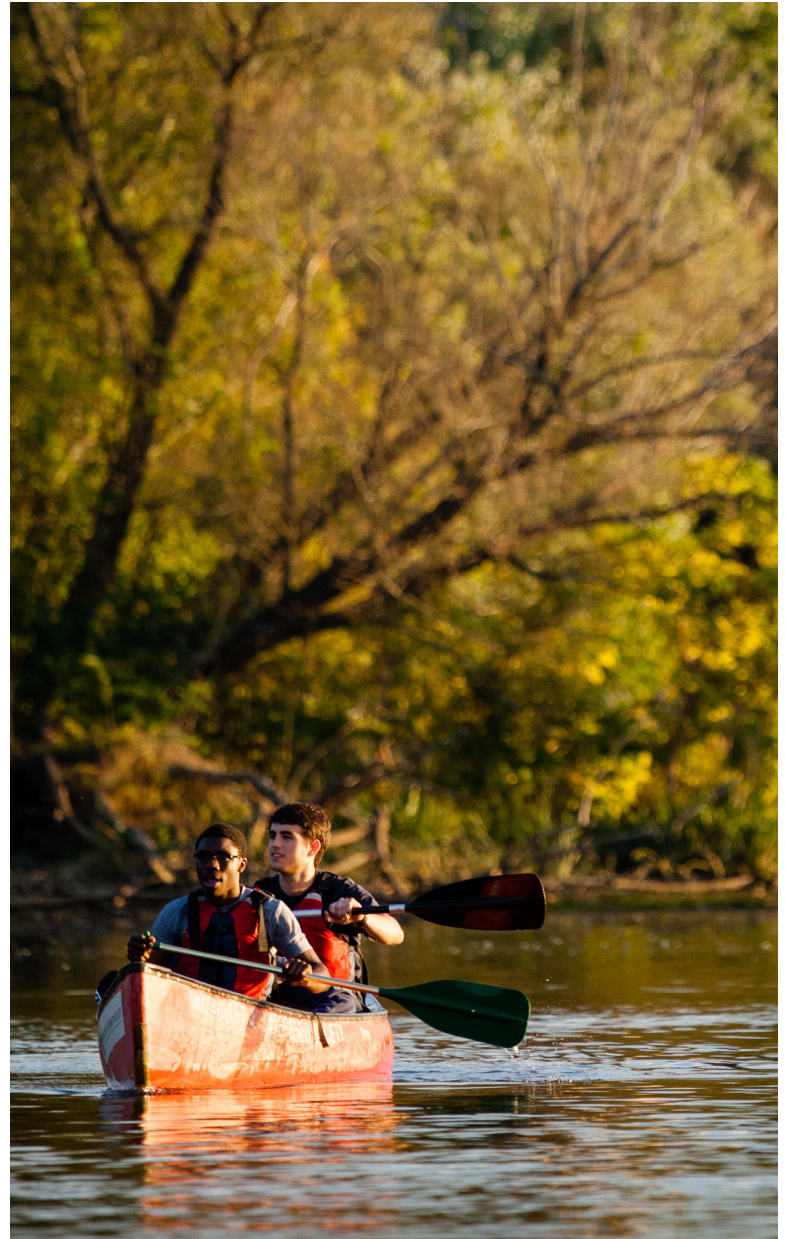
Individual grade activities are complemented by school-wide events such as Earth Day, Growing Healthy Schools Month and the Wellness Fair. The idea is that by graduation, students have a holistic view of how humans are connected to and responsible for being ecologically responsible citizens.

Educator resources

Bay Backpack is a free, online resource that supports hands-on environmental learning and provides educators with information on funding opportunities, field studies, curriculum guides and lesson plans.

Bay Backpack is also home to *An Educator's Guide to the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience*. Through MWEs, students of all ages begin to develop a stewardship ethic that will support a lifelong relationship with the environment.

Learn more at baybackpack.com.



Environmental literacy in action: High schooler students participate in a free paddle night organized by the Anacostia Watershed Society near Kenilworth Park in Washington, D.C. The students are part of the Green Team program through Groundwork Anacostia.