Recommendations to help achieve the goal of providing

Every Student Every Year

with a Meaningful Outdoor Environmental Experience

*This document supports attainment of Element 2d. of the MSDE Environmental Literacy Plan: *Includes field and outdoor experiences for all students (annually)*

All students have opportunity to engage in learning about the environment in a natural setting (schoolyard, community or off site natural setting).

*This document also supports the execution of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement, Goal 1, Outcome 1.1: *States engage students at every grade level in outdoor activities designed to increase environmental literacy. OR...Beginning with the class of 2005, (the state will) provide a meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience for every school student in the watershed before graduation from high school.*

This experience is frequently referred to as a meaningful watershed environmental experience or a MWEE.

Criteria for Implementing Meaningful Outdoor Environmental Education

- Delivers standards-based, multidisciplinary K-12 instruction through hands-on, outdoor field investigations
- Connects characteristics of the local environment and/or local environmental issues to larger ecological systems
- Utilizes inquiry instruction and cooperative learning
- Involves students in investigative and/or hands-on activities that address environmental issues and include preparation, action plans, student action, and reflection
- Includes all students

Goal: Deliver Maryland State Department of Education Standards-based instruction through hands-on, outdoor field investigations and stewardship

Action: Create a plan...for a class of students, a grade level, a school, or a school system!

Who? These are the people who can contribute to creating and implementing a plan with the roles they can play.

- Administration – principals, assistant principals, curriculum supervisors, staff development supervisors: Create an expectation that outdoor environmental experiences will occur every year for every student
- Teachers – all teachers plus a lead teacher in each school: Plan and implement outdoor environmental education lessons
- Building Services/Facilities Managers – Support instruction in the outdoors
Parents – Support schools and students in participating in outdoor environmental investigations

Environmental Education Service Providers – Offer resources, sites, staff, and technical assistance to support outdoor learning

Students – all or some at age appropriate level: Participate in planning

**What?** These are elements of standards based instruction and best practices that should be part of lessons. (All of the elements do not have to be in every outdoor environmental experience.)

- Include a local context (local environment as a venue for environmental issue) and connect it to larger ecological system
- Include data collection and analysis
- Identify an authentic action that children can do – empower them to feel they can make a difference
- Include opportunities to collaborate and communicate findings
- Identify cross-curricular connections
- Evaluate success and assess learning

**When?** To ensure that outdoor environmental education occurs, it must be planned into the year.

- Schedule dates on the annual/master calendar for these experiences at the start of the new year

**Where?** These are locations where outdoor environmental education lessons can occur.

- Schoolyard
- Local walk-able neighborhood natural areas
- Regional environmental organizations
- Local, state and federal parks

**How?** These are processes to implement.

- Identify curricular connections that would benefit most by an outdoor investigation
- Identify partners that could assist with or provide the experience
- Engage partners in planning an integrated experience
- Identify the location for the field investigation – schoolyard, community, field trip
- Provide professional development to ensure:
  - Comfort with being outdoors
  - Management of students in the outdoors – maintaining safety and an orderly setting for learning
  - Understanding of inquiry
  - Ability to generate testable questions
- Obtain permission from administrator and parents
Opportunities for a meaningful outdoor environmental experience for students:

Example from environmental education providers:


Examples from formal environmental educators:


Example from a regional program with multiple partners:

http://www.calvertnet.k12.md.us/departments/other/chespax/lessonplans.html

A resource for environmental lessons:

http://www.baybackpack.com/index.cfm?page=app.resources