

Environmental Literacy

DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION

Thousands of students and staff spend many hours each day at schools throughout our city. The City is committed to sustainability by minimizing the environmental impact of buildings, educating school communities about the connections between their daily actions and the environment, and empowering students to be leaders in creating a more sustainable city and society.

CURRENT STATUS

Baltimore City Public Schools has a part-time, grant-funded Sustainability Coordinator; has a Sustainability Policy; supports the Green Schools Network of partners; is working to train teachers to teach their students to become environmentally literate; and, is improving daily operations to be more sustainable.

EQUITY INDICATORS

Baltimore City Public Schools serves approximately 82,000 students each year. Of those: 81% are African American and 9% are Hispanic/Latino, 64.7% are low income, 5.6% are English language learners, and 14.8 % have disabilities. City Schools seeks to systematically integrate environmental literacy at all schools, so that students have the same environmental experience wherever they attend school.

STRATEGIES

1. Graduate students who are environmentally literate

Research shows that well-integrated environmental education, both formal and informal, furthers academic achievement, such as math and literacy.

Action 1 - Increase the number of teachers integrating environmental literacy by providing a range of mandatory and optional professional development opportunities delivered by staff and partners, and by connecting teachers to partners for on-site and off-site support including connections to local waterways.

Action 2 - Meet Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and Maryland Environmental Literacy Standards by developing and instituting aligned curricula in all grades. Ensure the delivery of science curriculum at every grade level including the incorporation meaningful outdoor learning experiences.

Action 3 – Prepare students for “green” careers by providing internships, service learning hours, industry certifications, academic credit programs, and fellowships, and by including student learning opportunities in building design and operations.

Action 4 - Recruit and retain staff interested in sustainability by sharing sustainability goals, practices and opportunities with potential and current teachers and staff, and by integrating sustainability goals in orientation materials for all staff as a core institutional value.

2. Support student leaders

Action 1: Support student-led green projects by providing grants, leadership training opportunities, and other resources.

Action 2: Encourage high school students to gain work experience by providing paid environmental internships and sharing opportunities for service learning and summer jobs with partner organizations and businesses.

Action 3: Prioritize youth economic sustainability to build up independence including but not limited to expanding technical skills programs, teaching financial literacy, connecting students to job opportunities in the sustainability field, and supporting youth in developing business and entrepreneurship skills.

3. Build and maintain partnerships with public, non-profit, and for-profit entities and individuals interested in sustainability.

Action 1: Maintain and nurture the Green Schools Network by providing monthly updates to network member, holding an annual meeting of the network, and participating in local, regional, and national networking events.

Action 2: Connect staff, teachers and partners to make and build partnerships by strengthening opportunities for parental and community involvement, and identifying opportunities for leveraging funding and other support for schools, students, and teachers.

Action 3: Facilitate sustained engagement and partnership with families and volunteers. Develop opportunities for parent learning about and involvement in school and community sustainability issues.

4. Increase the number of schools certified as “green” by promoting certification by a recognized program such as the Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) and the National Wildlife Federation.

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

Strategy 1: Provide at least one Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) for all students in each grade band of 1-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

Strategy 2: Train all teachers annually to integrate environmental themes and projects into lessons.

Strategy 3: