

Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature

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For 1/22/15 Partnership meeting – background material for breakout discussions

Planning for 2015

What is needed in order to develop more environmentally literate young citizens in Maryland? To answer this ongoing question, participants will break into small discussion groups to look at needs and opportunities for action items for the Partnership in 2015. Resulting ideas will be used by the Steering Committee to develop the 2015 CIN Action Plan.

Discussion guidance:

- Review the list of highlights of CIN work done in these areas to date (below).
- Brainstorm what is missing and what still needs to happen,
- Generate ideas for action items that the Partnership could do this year.
- Consider and offer suggestions on:
 - **Resources;**
 - Potential **opportunities** (including what those present might be able to contribute directly);
 - **New partners** or stakeholders to bring to the table.

DISCUSSION TOPICS/ Breakout groups:

- **Means** – Do we have the means in place in all areas necessary to be successful? This group will discuss the “who and how” to engage (examples: reaching diverse audiences, preparing teachers, engaging parents/families, broadening partnerships, etc.).
 - **Content** – “What” are some content areas we need to address in ways that we are not currently (such as climate change, big picture conservation issues, increased outdoor experiences, health considerations)?
 - **Access** – Is nature accessible for all schools and communities? What are some areas that need attention to be sure all children have the “where,” i.e., green spaces available and easily accessed, transportation to natural areas, programming in parks and interest among families, and more.
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PARTNERSHIP’S ACTIONS in recent years:

Consider how these activities/ accomplishments match up with the three discussion topics above. What is missing that still needs to be done to advance our efforts?

(1) Assist and support ongoing development of school system Environmental Literacy Programs, provide for student opportunities, and prepare teachers –

- **Hosted / supported opportunities for collaboration and partnership-building among schools and EE providers:**
 - State EE Briefing (twice per year).
 - Ongoing statewide and regional E-Lit meetings (formal and nonformal educators).
 - Summer College and Career Readiness workshops.
 - Working with institutions of higher education to incorporate E-Lit in teacher pre-service programs.
 - Increasing connections to teacher professional development opportunities in EE.
 - Improved information exchange throughout the year (via email, social media, etc).
- **Supported the MAEOE Maryland Green Schools and Green Centers Program:**
 - Helped align Maryland’s best practices with those of US Green Ribbon Schools program.
 - Helped in promoting both MD and US programs and associated trainings and application processes.
 - Assisted schools in developing Green School practices and projects.
 - Supported the annual Youth Summit.

- **Ongoing promotion of “Every Student Every Year” receiving outdoor learning experiences:**
 - Produced a planning document for accomplishing ESEY in schools and districts (<http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/environmental/index.html>).
 - Participating in revising Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) MWEE definition, developing tracking tool to measure effectiveness of MWEEs and E-Lit programs, supporting E-Lit efforts regionally (among Bay states).
 - Recommendations to new Hogan Administration on improving transportation of students for field experiences, improving school grounds for outdoor experiences, and increasing teacher professional development – to possibly inform policy, operations and funding decisions.
 - Participating in development of the *Maryland School Grounds for Learning* project.

(2) Enhance equitable access to green space and outdoor opportunities (“nearby nature”) for every community –

- Incorporating green space planning and access into state and local development and redevelopment planning efforts. Working with the planning community / local planners to identify strategies to increase nearby nature for Maryland communities.
- Provided recommendations in state and local planning policy and guidance (Land Preservation and Recreation Plan), Sustainable Communities, climate adaptation planning and state and local health efforts.
- Ongoing promotion of Nature Play Spaces as alternatives to traditional playgrounds:
 - Developed online pattern book to assist planning and developing Nature Play Spaces.
 - Developed several demonstration projects at state and local parks, municipal facilities, day care and school properties.
 - Hosted two annual Nature Play Spaces workshops.
 - Collaborated on national guidelines and provided technical assistance across the state.
- Connecting community stakeholders to others to seek collaborative solutions including Maryland Planning Directors and land conservation organizations (see Health, below).

(3) Focus on promoting Healthy Maryland Children (health initiatives) as a means to engage communities in increased physical fitness through nature based recreational activities –

- Host / facilitate stakeholder gatherings to promote discussion among interest groups re health, connections to nature, education, community engagement, improving equity in access to green spaces [forum held 2012; updated stakeholder meetings/discussions held 2014, to be continued in 2015].
- Worked with a local community and parks department to pilot initiatives to enhance interest among families in nature-oriented outdoor pursuits, in collaboration with Docs in the Parks efforts.
- Integrating agriculture education and gardening practices into schools and community programming:
 - Hosted several workshops with Farm-based Educators.
 - Developing a new agriculture education curriculum (Chesapeake Food, Farm and Bay).
 - Ongoing promotion and support of Farm to School program and encouraging school and community vegetable gardening.
- Recommendations to new Hogan Administration called for providing safely walkable access to green space in every community as a priority – to possibly inform policy, operations and funding decisions.