

Environmental Literacy in Delaware

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.

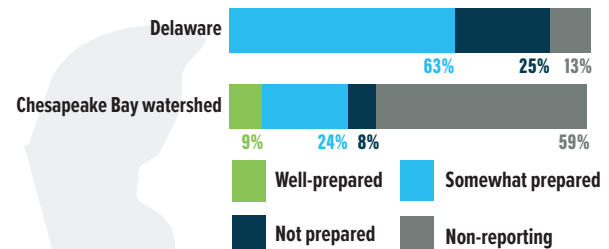
Along with Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington, D.C., Delaware has committed to helping its students graduate with the knowledge and skills needed to act responsibly to protect and restore their local watersheds. They will do this through:

- **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 portion of Delaware that lies within the Chesapeake Bay watershed is home to eight school districts serving 43,000 students. In 2017, seven of these districts responded to the Chesapeake Bay Program's survey to measure environmental literacy preparedness and MWEE availability in public schools.

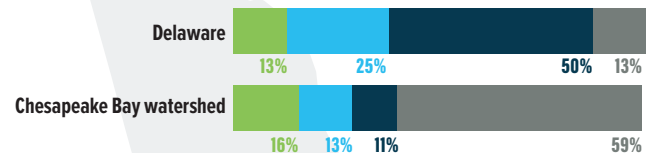
How does Delaware compare to the Chesapeake Bay watershed?

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

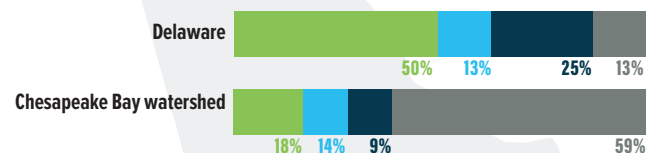


Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs): School districts that reported providing MWEEs to their students

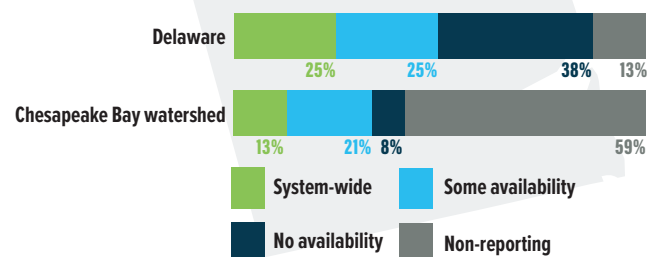
MWEE Availability in Elementary Schools



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

Thanks to a NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training grant, the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's (DNREC) Division of Parks and Recreation and the Delaware Department of Education collaborated with Delaware Children in Nature partners to implement MWEEs for fifth, eighth and ninth grade students. DNREC's parks division, the Delaware Nature Society (DNS), Delaware science teachers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) developed the new curriculum and new outdoor learning spaces were constructed within the Caesar Rodney and Laurel School Districts.

DNREC's parks division and DNS also developed lessons to bring learning outside. Thanks to the USFWS, new learning spaces are available for students to use as an outdoor classroom. The Caesar Rodney School District also worked with Sustainable Schools programs and will implement these practices district-wide.

The final component of this grant was a teacher workshop on MWEEs. The state is currently reviewing these programs for adoption as statewide-recommended science curriculum.

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 MWEEs, 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: Naturalist Joseph McCarthy from Trap Pond State Park explains how pollution travels through a watershed while exhibiting the park's Mobile Science Lab, which travels among many schools in the watershed.