

The Allegany County Collaboration for Environmental Literacy (ACCEL)

Goal: Collaborate to **improve student environmental literacy** by 25% County-wide and serve as a county model for environmental education

Partners: Evergreen Heritage Center (EHC) Foundation, Frostburg State University (FSU), Allegany College of Maryland (ACM), Allegany County Public Schools (ACPS), the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Chesapeake Bay Trust, Allegany County Head Start, the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Strategy:

- Build upon proven, successful outdoor environmental education programs that offer **consistent, grade-wide experiences**
- Begin education efforts early, **starting with preschool** (Head Start)
- Provide **at least one meaningful outdoor experience (MOE) per child per year** from preschool through grade twelve
- **“Raise the bar”** by using the scientific method and proven techniques to help students investigate and understand complex environmental issues
- **Utilize assessment tools** such as topic-specific pre/post-tests
- **Reinforce environmental literacy for at-risk children** via the After School program and reward literacy excellence through Envirothon competition
- **Offer field experience** (and STEM credentials) to college students who assist with MOEs and create MOE education
- **Create a system of outdoor learning stations** and lessons to enable all Maryland educators to provide MOEs for their students
- Offer a **robust yet flexible professional development** program to encourage more interactive outdoor education.

Year 3 Results (2014/15):

- **Increased Environmental Literacy.** Participating 3rd Grade, 7th Grade and high school Earth and Environmental Science classes achieved a 23 to 39% improvement in student environmental literacy.
- **Grade-Wide MOEs for Multiple Grades.** The ACCEL partnership successfully provided MOEs for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, Earth/Space, and Environmental Science students, as well as eight classes of Head Start. In total, the partnership served **4894 students** or 109% of its 4500 student target.
- **E-Lit Professional Development for All Teachers.** The ACCEL partnership also achieved a key goal of educating **60 or more** educators on the new environmental literacy graduation requirement and providing sample activities that they may use to provide schoolyard MOEs for their students.
- **Learning Stations and Lessons that can be used to provide additional MOEs.** ACCEL partners also exceeded their goal of developing EHC outdoor learning stations and MOE lessons that can be used for both EHC MOEs and additional MOEs in the schoolyard. The team has developed a total of 30 stations and an associated **61 MOE lessons**, all aligned with the Maryland State Curriculum.



Head Start children make their own binoculars and learn about woodland animals



Life Science students investigate species from the EHC pond and role-play migrating geese



Earth Science students investigate land use and analyze the soil