Environmental Literacy in the District

An environmental literacy plan creates the framework for academic standards and achievement, professional development, assessment, and leadership that will allow individuals and organizations to thrive and achieve innovation in education. On July 2, 2012, Mayor Vincent C. Gray submitted the final draft of the DC Environmental Literacy Plan to DC Council. The DC Environmental Literacy Plan is the local component for regional and national environmental literacy efforts, such as the Chesapeake Bay Executive Order 13508 and the No Child Left Inside Act of 2011. A requirement of the Healthy Schools Act of 2010, this plan provides a framework to guide efforts to ensure that District students will be prepared to make informed decisions concerning the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century.

Environmental Literacy

Environmental literacy is defined as the development of knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to make informed decisions concerning the relationships among natural and urban systems.

An environmentalliterate person:

- Discusses and describes ecological and environmental systems and human impacts on these systems;
- Engages in hands-on, outdoor learning experiences that involve discovery, inquiry, and problem solving;
- Formulates questions and analyzes information pertaining to his or her surrounding environment; and
- Understands how to take actions that respect, restore, protect, and sustain the health and well-being of human communities and environmental systems.

DC Environmental Literacy Plan

The DC Environmental Literacy Plan includes:

- Relevant teaching and learning standards adopted by the State Board of Education;
- Professional development opportunities for teachers;
- Criteria for measuring environmental literacy;
- Governmental and nongovernmental entities that can assist schools; and
- Implementation guidelines for the plan.
DC Environmental Literacy Plan

Objectives and Goals

1) Integrate environmental literacy concepts into the K-12 curriculum by creating frameworks for integration, such as scope and sequence documents that include meaningful outdoor educational experiences at every grade level.

2) Increase and improve environmental education and training for all stakeholders by creating professional development opportunities for pre-service and in-service teachers, as well as environmental education professionals.

3) Integrate environmental literacy into the secondary school experience by increasing the number of environmental tracks, courses, and programs offered at every school, and increasing the visibility of and access to environmental community service projects.

4) Create meaningful measures of student environmental literacy by determining whether academic assessments can reflect the shift of environmental literacy as it is increasingly integrated into DC Content Standards.

5) Maximize school facilities and grounds to create learning opportunities for all students by creating and maintaining outdoor schoolyard spaces to encourage and support outdoor learning experiences and encouraging schools to apply to the U.S. Green Ribbon Schools program.

6) Encourage collaboration and engagement across all sectors involved in implementation by creating state infrastructure for implementation of the DC Environmental Literacy Plan.

The plan also includes appendices that describe existing science and social studies standards that support environmental literacy, organizations with resources for schools, and case studies of environmental literacy in schools.

Partners

- District of Columbia Public Schools
- DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education
- DC Public Charter School Board
- DC State Board of Education
- DC Department of Parks and Recreation
- University of the District of Columbia
- DC Environmental Education Consortium

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For more information, visit: ddeo.dc.gov/education