

School Board Presentation

script for Essex County Public Schools

Introduction from Angela Gross (Executive Director of Teaching and Learning)

I am very excited to introduce our New Environmental Literacy Plan to the Community with one of our partners, Anna Moreau. The Hanover-Caroline Soil and Water Conservation District recently completed a NOAA BWET Building Capacity Grant which we called Project W²ONDER. The goal of the grant was to help the school districts in the Middle Peninsula (Caroline, Essex, & Middlesex) build equitable, sustainable, & systemic Environmental Literacy Plans. Friends of the Rappahannock and Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay are partners on the grant.

Anna Moreau (shares slides of highlights from the [Essex ELP](#))

As you can see, this plan has four goals. The goals were generated by the ECPS Steering Committee members who contributed to the ELP. The goals place an emphasis on using the natural resources of Essex to make cross-curricular connections, professional development for teachers, collaboration with community partners for field experiences, and offering a variety of career connections for students. Each one of these goals has objectives to help achieve them, some of which have been completed by the creation of this plan. Most importantly, these goals allow students to be prepared for at least three Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences or “MWEEs” they will have during elementary school, intermediate school, Environmental Science, and Biology.

One of the first activities the steering committee participated in was reviewing the comprehensive plan and other state and local Environmental Literacy plans. Committee members used relevant information from those plans in addition to the district’s focus on raising student achievement through quality resources and highly qualified staff to guide the ELP goals you see published. This slide highlights where the strongest alignment exists between the ELP and the Essex comprehensive plan.

Essex was in a unique situation with the development of the ELP. The Center for Educational Partnership (TCEP) and Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) have been working with science teachers since March of 2023 as part of another NOAA BWET grant held by Essex, separate from Project W²ONDER. Due to the unique overlap of the two grants, we were able to wrap those experiences into the Essex ELP. Over the past two years, Friends of the Rappahannock has conducted 11 days of professional development for science teachers and 25 outdoor field experiences (field trips) for students in grades 4th - 8th, Environmental Science and Biology. These activities give

teachers the skills and tools to support the students' knowledge in making informed decisions about their community and ultimately help meet Goal 3 of the ELP.

The bulk of the ELP consists of the Environmental Literacy Activity Guide. On this slide is an example showing the SOL (Standards of Learning) 5.9 in fifth grade. The Activity Guide is based on the Virginia Department of Education's science Standards of Learning, and is vertically aligned from kindergarten through biology. All of the SOLs focus on the connection to environmental education. Each SOL has suggested activities within the bounds of the classroom and schoolyard, and activities that reach into community spaces. We have also included a list of community partners who can help facilitate these learning experiences for students. As you browse through the full guide, please look for the MWEE circle icon, which notes where a full MWEE will occur.

Community Speaker

Consider asking a school division personnel who can speak to the power and potential of the ELP.

The next steps of the ELP include....

- ECPS School Board reviews the ELP
- Administration and School Board publicize the ELP
- Distribute ELP widely!
- Put the ELP into action by ensuring that it's written into the curriculum and begin a plan for providing professional development for teachers
- Continue to work toward meeting the goals of the ELP
- Continue to implement MWEEs in 5, 6, during Environmental Science & biology classes
- When necessary, convene the ECPS ELP Steering Committee to review and revise ELP
- Continue to foster relationships with partners that are helping support our goals

As the BLANK [depends on speaker], I am most enthusiastic about providing students with opportunities that promote environmental literacy. This is essential for nurturing the next generation to become responsible stewards of the environment. These are just a few ideas for implementing the ELP, and we welcome input from the school board and the broader school community. I would also like to express my gratitude to the dedicated collaborators who supported us in creating this document—their contributions were invaluable.