

The Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education Maryland Green Center Certification Program Guide



The Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE), a nonprofit educational association, serves thousands of teachers, natural resource managers, nature center staff, and environmental program managers and others. MAEOE provides dynamic training programs, workshops, conferences, awards programs, networking opportunities, publications and resources. MAEOE encourages, educates, supports, and inspires Maryland educators to build a citizenry that understands and is responsibly engaged in advancing sustainability to address human needs and to conserve the Earth's natural resources. MAEOE's signature programs are:

- The MAEOE Conference –a state environmental education conference
- Environmental Educator Certification
- The Maryland Green School Awards Certification

The Maryland Green Schools Awards Program

Maryland has over 2200 schools with over 1 million students, representing roughly 1 in 5 Maryland citizens. These school communities, buildings and sites offer a significant opportunity in maintaining and improving environmental sustainability. The MAEOE Maryland Green School Awards program is formally supported by a number of federal, state and county governments and school systems, as well as environmental and education non profits. To date, 398 schools have certified, with strong interest and growth. The program supports efforts of the state to meet the requirements of the Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement, the Baltimore Watershed Agreement, and other legal mandates to improve the health of watersheds and the Chesapeake Bay. The Maryland Green School Program is also a vehicle for fulfilling the environmental literacy standards from the Maryland State Department of Education and the high school graduation requirement for public school students.

The Maryland Green Center Certification

Maryland Green Center Certification is a way to recognize and honor a facility's efforts in implementation of environmental education, best management practices and community engagement. Centers offer support to schools working toward certification as Maryland Green Schools. Centers educate schools, teachers and parents about the Maryland Green School Program. Their staff and volunteers assist schools in fulfilling the requirements to earn the award. There are 32 Certified Maryland Green Centers. The certification is valid for four years.

What is required for Center Certification?

Document two years of performance, from September of year one until June of the year two (e.g. September 2010 to June 2012) in the following areas:

Support of Area Schools in Obtaining MDGS Status	Best Management Practices	Community Outreach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitating Trainings ○ Promoting/Supporting MDGS • Student Programs • Project Supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Conservation/Pollution Prevention • Energy Conservation • Waste Reduction • Habitat Restoration • Structures for Environmental Learning • Responsible Transportation • Healthy Center Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs extend into the community • Community Partnerships

Steps to Achieving Maryland Green Center Certification

1. Plan out activities over the two years of the application period (four years)
2. Incorporate Maryland Green School Program Information into your programs.
3. Complete the requirements of the 3 areas of the application.
4. Document your center's actions.
5. File the Intent to Apply by February 1st, 2012.
6. Complete the application, and submit by April 1st, 2012
7. Celebrate your achievements at the Maryland Green School Awards Ceremony and Youth Summit, June 1st, 2012 at Sandy Point State Park

The Application

Part 1: The Cover Sheet

A Committee must be involved in the preparation of the application. The committee should include, but is not limited to a student, non-formal educator, administrator, community partner, facility personnel and formal or non formal educator. We are looking for a comprehensive team, supported by the top administrator.

Part 2: Summary

a. One Page Narrative Overview

This is a stand-alone section which should present a general profile of the center, noting the location of the center, scope of programming, who you serve etc. This section provides the review panel with an introduction to the MD Green Center activities and will be used for public information if the center receives MAEOE Maryland Green Center Certification. The information will be shared with schools, centers, and the press.

b. The Top Five List

The center's application is a compilation of the wonderful activities, projects, and experiences that tell the story of their Maryland Green Center journey. During the Awards Ceremony, it is customary to highlight these accomplishments for each center as they are presented their Maryland Green Center flag. Following the ceremony, the Center's accomplishments are

posted on the MAEOE website as a guide for others. MAEOE uses this list and the requested CD of photos to honor the Center.

Part 3: Objective 1: Support of Area Schools in Obtaining MDGS Status

Criteria 1: Teacher Professional Development

A. Providing Professional Development Opportunities for Teachers

Centers should be providing or facilitating professional development for schools. MAEOE has a broad definition of professional development. We expect 10% of schools staff to be involved in professional development or other training activities that enhance environmental awareness, literacy, knowledge, skills, and/or related instructional strategies. You can help facilitate this in many different ways. For example, you can provide your own professional development programs, go to the school to train on a subject matter that teachers could teach, and/or host an external professional development opportunity (e.g. Project Wet), a speaker series etc. For Maryland Green School Certification, a majority of school staff needs to be engaged in some type of environmental learning, so promoting your adult activities to the school staff can help them fulfill this requirement.

B. Promotion/Support of the Maryland Green School Program

As a Maryland Green Center you should promote the MAEOE Maryland Green School program. We don't expect every center to have specific Maryland Green School programming but to promote the program with the schools you work with. For example, add some slides about the program into your professional development material, informing teachers how their program with you helps to fulfill a requirement of the Maryland Green School Application. We ask that your center provide support to schools in their green school process. Examples: Provide documentation for the activities they did with you to include with their application, work closely with a school to guide its MAEOE MDGS application process. There are many options to support schools in their efforts. Partner with MAEOE and/or schools to identify and prepare grant proposals for funding Green school activities such as Outdoor Education experiences, funds for busses to the annual Youth Summit or funds to support professional development for teachers.

Criteria 2: Student Programs

Centers are expected to provide programs that support the school's curriculum and environmental literacy requirements. Your programming should provide programmatic support for MAEOE Maryland Green School activities (see the MAEOE MDGS application guide for schools).

Criteria 3: Project Supports

Centers should provide support for school's green school projects. This can include:

- Financial support and/or assisting with grant information and grant writing.
- Providing materials, trees, plants, volunteers
- Providing technical support for planning and implementation of projects.

- Providing contacts and connections to the appropriate resources.
- Partnering with schools to design solutions to environmental issues in the community.
- Providing projects suitable for students to earn Student Service Learning hours.

Objective 2: Best Management Practices

Environmental best management practices (BMPs) are modeled in the operation, design, and maintenance of the center’s building and grounds. Like your programs, the center’s building and site is a tool to achieve curricular goals. Examination of your site offers an opportunity for students to interact with the environment, observe, explore, ask questions and seek answers to assess their local ecosystem. Some of the data that students can collect includes information on existing wildlife diversity, steep slopes, land use, erosion problems and naturalized space.

The center models what it teaches. The center models **all seven BMP’s**. There are many ways to address these requirements, below is a description of the scope of each and some examples. We expect that centers use their best management practices as teaching tools, such as with signage to identify your green practices or incorporating the BMP’s into your programs.

Water Conservation/Water Pollution Prevention

The scope: Indoor and outdoor user behavior- smarter water use, the energy and resource impacts of producing drinking water and treating wastewater, storm water management, erosion control, ways to reduce polluted runoff from the school site that impact watersheds and the Chesapeake Bay.

Examples: “Bay starts here” stickers on faucets, low flow fixtures, rain gardens, erosion control measures, storm drain stenciling, green roofs, rain barrels, constructed wetlands, water quality monitoring, tree plantings, no mow zones, impervious surface reduction, education/awareness efforts.

Energy Conservation

The scope: To investigate and reduce energy use, changing facilities and user behavior to reduce energy use.

Examples: Education/awareness to turn off the lights and devices, conduct energy audit, retrofitting, tracking and reporting energy savings, daylighting, controls of phantom loads, HVAC replacement, occupancy sensors, purchase renewable power, tree planting for shade/cooling.

Waste Reduction

The scope: Resource use, waste disposal and waste management. Examine resource use, with user education and behavior changes to reduce the waste stream.

Examples: Tracking and reporting number of pounds of waste reduced or recycled, composting, purchasing products with less packaging, education/awareness.

Habitat Restoration

The scope: Examination of the site for opportunities for improving or restoring habitat, with education on the benefits to the local ecosystem and watershed.

Examples: Native plant gardens, butterfly gardens, wetlands, rain gardens, meadows, bird/bat boxes, tree/shrub planting, removal of invasives, education/awareness.

Structures for Environmental Learning

The Scope: Design and installation of habitat enhancing materials for the center to use for ongoing outdoor environmental learning, for restoring habitat, and returning habitat diversity.

Examples: Interpretive signage, trails, boardwalks, viewing blinds, tree ID tags, Bluebird houses, pervious walkways, green roofs, outdoor classrooms, outdoor art.

Responsible Transportation

The Scope: Examine the transportation options used by visitors and staff. Design and promote responsible and healthy options. Educate the community on the impacts of pollution from storm water from impervious surfaces on the watershed.

Examples: Carpooling programs, no-idle zones, walking, bike racks, bike lanes, use of public transportation, education/awareness actions.

Healthy Environment

The Scope: Healthy indoor and outdoor environment, types of cleaners, chemicals, pesticides used, lighting options, drinking water quality, ventilation, purchasing options, and maintenance choices.

Examples: The safe use of chemicals, an Integrated Pest Management plan, indoor air quality, water quality testing, the purchase of environmentally friendly products.

Objective 3: Community Partnerships

The center should provide programs to serve the community, partner with schools for action in the community and partner with the community to work on environmental issues at schools.

What are the Benefits of Becoming a Maryland Green Center?

- Statewide recognition of your scope of services to the community
- Support of Chesapeake Bay Agreements, The Baltimore Watershed Agreement, NOAA, EPA targets

- Potential marketing, fundraising or grant support
- Publicity
- A pipeline of schools using your programs, seeking assistance in being a Green School
- Ability to advertise events on the MAEOE Calendar
- Networking opportunities with parks/nature centers/outdoor education centers around the state
- Statewide intelligence from MAEOE on developments in environmental issues (quarterly newsletters, other alerts)

What kind of documentation is required?

The reviewers need to be able to determine the scope of activities from the materials provided without being familiar with the facility. We want to encourage an organized presentation, but allow for creativity. Efficient methods of showing activities such as charts, and graphs are desirable. Volume isn't required, just clearly showing activities – i.e. a graph of activities with one photo of each. Documentation may include, but are not limited to:

- Photographs, video, website presentations, wikis
- Data charts
- Program or meeting agendas
- Certificates
- Specific lesson plans
- Calendars, maps
- Blueprints
- Newspaper articles
- Site maps indicating activities and their locations on school campuses application

Application Deadlines and Fees

- File an intent to apply at www.maeoe.org by February 1st
- The Application Fee is \$30.
- Download the application at <http://www.maeoe.org/greenschools/greencenters/MDGCportalindex.php>
- Applications can be electronic – i.e. on a website, Wikispaces site, or Power Point; or binder format
- Applications are due by April 1st
- Decisions are communicated by April 30th
- Celebrate at the Maryland Green Schools Awards Ceremony and Youth Summit
- Certifications are valid for 4 years, Centers then apply to recertify.

The Maryland Green School Awards Ceremony and Youth Summit

The **3rd annual Youth Summit is June 1st, 2012** at Sandy Point State Park. The event is free to all schools in Maryland. Those interested in becoming Green Schools, those in the process of becoming Green Schools and those who are selected as Green Schools and Centers in 2012 are invited to participate in this all-day, educational field experience. We expect more than 5000 students and teachers. Green Centers should encourage schools that they work with to attend the event.

The event components:

1. **Maryland Green School & Centers Award Ceremonies** - Certifying schools and centers are recognized by MAEOE in the presence of their peers and special guests to publicly validate their accomplishments.
2. **Youth Leadership Development Activities**- A series of workshops and forums designed to empower middle and high school students, with an environmental jobs component
3. **Environmental Literacy Bazaar** - Education through hands-on learning designed to empower youth in short interactive learning sessions. The environmental literacy bazaar features learning stations with separate areas geared to elementary, middle and high school students. Many partners across Maryland participate including: Maryland State Parks, NOAA, National Geographic, nature centers, Master Gardeners, UMD Extension, The Chesapeake Bay Foundation and many others.
4. **Governor's address (invited)**

Green Centers may participate in the Summit in several ways:

- Help plan the event
- Attend with your schools.
- Participate in the Awards Ceremony
- Be an exhibitor in the Environmental Literacy Bazaar
- Showcase your youth programs
- Sponsor a school traveling to the event
- Volunteer to help out with the Summit

Questions about the MAEOE Green Center Program, the Application process or the Youth Summit can be sent to greenschools@maeoe.org or mdgsorganizer@maeoe.org