



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Record Number of Maryland Schools Certified as "Green Schools" By State Association

ANNAPOLIS: On a rainy day in April, representatives from the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) reviewed, ranked, and rewarded 70 schools with the Maryland Green School Certification and 2 centers with the Maryland Green Center Certification. In addition 13 schools and 5 centers were recertified for the first time, 4 schools for the second time and 2 schools for the third time. "We knew it was going to be a bumper crop this year, but had no idea the exact scope," said outgoing Maryland Green School Coordinator Carol Thompson. The 2009 crop of Maryland Green Schools is the largest in the program's 11-year history.

Over the course of two years, the average time it takes for a school to effectively fulfill all of the requirements, schools go through a metamorphosis. The environment is integrated into every aspect of the school's culture including professional development for teachers, curricular enhancement, structural modifications to the schoolyard and buildings, behavior modification, community engagement and celebration.

"When I hand those Maryland Green School flags (symbol of certification) to the schools, I know without a doubt that Maryland's future is bright and strong and in good hands," said Bronwyn Mitchell, MAEOE's Executive Director.

Governor O'Malley recognized the power inherent in MAEOE's Maryland Green School Program by including it as a model program in the state environmental literacy plan's recommended actions, developed by the Governor's Partnership for Children in Nature. Elena Takaki, MAEOE Board President and the Maryland Department of Natural Resource's representative for the Partnership for Children in Nature explained that, "As a result of the certification process, schools are working to lower greenhouse gas emissions, reducing pollutant export to the Bay, staunching solid waste disposal, and increasing wildlife habitat. However, the benefits of the Maryland Green School Program cut much deeper."

Bronwyn Mitchell went on to explain that Maryland Green Schools have been proven to outperform non-Green Schools in math and reading, even when socio-economic factors are removed. The 21st century work-force will be driven by the green-collar sector. Professional success is therefore inextricably linked to environmental literacy. In terms of health, a connection to the natural world has been proven to reduce the symptoms of ADHD and stimulate the imagination and discovery. "In a country where students sit more than move, are plugged in to electronic media more often than not, and can identify over 2,000 corporate logos but not a single species of tree, we need Maryland Green Schools."

All new and recertifying Maryland Green Schools and Centers will be recognized at a series of ceremonies at the end of May and the beginning of June. Parents, teachers, and other interested parties can learn how to transform their school into a Maryland Green School by contacting MAEOE at maeoe.org to start the transformation.

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