



Virginia Naturally School Recognition Program

Welcome:

Virginia Naturally Schools is the official environmental education school recognition program of the Commonwealth, administered by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with support from the Department of Education, Department of Environmental Quality and other resource agencies. This program recognizes the wonderful efforts of many Virginia schools to increase the environmental awareness and stewardship of our youngest citizens.

If your school has already been working with its community, resource agencies and businesses to include education about the environment in the curriculum then read on and apply for the Virginia Naturally School Recognition Award. This is not a one-time award but one upon which you may build and achieve additional recognitions each year you participate.

Goal:

To recognize those exemplary efforts undertaken by Virginia schools to increase the environmental awareness and stewardship of its students.

Award:

A tiered recognition program has been developed to award Virginia's schools:

- ❑ First year schools meeting the minimum requirements will receive a **Virginia Naturally** plaque.
- ❑ Schools maintaining and continuing their efforts in upcoming years will receive a pennant featuring one of Virginia's state symbols to hang in the school. A different pennant will be available for each additional year the school participates. In addition to the annual pennant, schools will be able to choose from a list of workshops that will help continue their effort. Photos of the awards can be seen at <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/education/school-recognition/awards.asp>

Application process:

Schools may submit applications between May 1 and June 30 of each school year. The recognition will be awarded in the following school year. Completed applications may be sent to:



Suzie Gilley
Wildlife Education Coordinator
Virginia Naturally Schools Chairperson – VRUEC
VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
P. O. Box 90778
Henrico, VA 23228
804/367-0188
Suzie.gilley@dgif.virginia.gov
www.dgif.virginia.gov



Virginia Naturally School Recognition Program Criteria

To receive a plaque, first year schools need to complete activities that fall in the top 4 categories. Additional requirements will be added each year a school participates in the program, see individual year applications.

1. **ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT:** There are measurable indicators of administrative support for conservation and environmental education programs. Indicators vary with the number of years the school participates. The administration should support field experiences and continued in-service related to natural resources. Levels of support **may** include:
 - The scheduling of EE in-service workshops for staff.
 - The conservation and environmental-related state standards are part of overall school goals.
 - Support for staffs' efforts to include EE in their curriculum.
 - Majority of school is involved in conservation and environmental education efforts.

 2. **STAFF DEVELOPMENT/ CURRICULUM INTEGRATION: High Quality Professional Development** that supports the integration of Conservation and Environmental Education into the core areas of the curriculum such as:
 - The environmental-related objectives found in the VA Standards of Learning constitute a critical focus in the overall curriculum of the school.
 - Each year, the school schedules personnel from public and/or private conservation or resource agencies to serve as classroom or assembly speakers, site consultants, or in-service or curriculum workshop leaders.
 - Training on integrating Outdoor gardens and /or outdoor lab sites as part of the overall program at all grade levels.

 3. **RESOURCE CONSERVATION:** School has an action plan for the reduction of and the conservation of resources including:
 - Energy and water conservation audits are conducted on an annual basis.
 - The school participates in school and/or community recycling programs.
 - The environmental health of the students, teachers and community is considered as part of the plan.

 4. **MEANINGFUL FIELD EXPERIENCES:** The students are involved in grade level appropriate field experiences as defined by the Chesapeake Bay Agreement www.chesapeakebay.net For example:
 - Group has an official school or community-based project.
 - Students are involved in field investigations on and/or off the school grounds.
 - Student driven action projects and activities are supported and encouraged.
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Additional year recognitions require that schools also meet one or more of the criteria listed below –see application for details

5. LIBRARY, EQUIPMENT RESOURCES: Additional resources have been made available to support conservation and environmental education efforts. *For example:*

- The school maintains an inventory of up-to-date print and manipulative Environmental Education resource materials for teachers and students,
- The school maintains an inventory of appropriate equipment for field observations and environmental monitoring such as field guides, insect nets and other field equipment.

6. INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING OR OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS: The school recognizes that conservation and environmental education may take place outside of the classroom. *For example:*

- The school grounds or nature area are developed in a manner that they provide for wildlife and are used for outdoor studies
- The school maintains an inventory of animals and plants growing on the school grounds, and has a long-term plan for increasing species diversity.
- School grounds Maintenance and Custodial staff are involved with the planning and implementation of the school's environmental program.

7. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT:

- School works with a diversity of partners such as the PTA, civic groups, school alumni, parks, and corporations to support programs either with volunteers, materials or financial assistance.
- School develops a long-term strategy for community involvement.