

MWEE Case Study:

Hedgesville Elementary School Supports Growth

Hedgesville Elementary School (HES) serves 620 students in grades K-2 in Berkeley County, West Virginia. Berkeley County Schools' mission is centered on the goal to inspire, empower, and prepare students for success in whichever pathway they seek. HES upholds the county's core beliefs and utilized a Meaningful Watershed Education Experience (MWEE) to enrich their students' interdisciplinary education, foster critical thinking, and engage in stewardship.

HES finds itself in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed due to its location in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle region, home to a portion of the Potomac River's headwaters and several of its tributaries. The town of Hedgesville is growing quickly, as is most of Berkeley County. The school has added teachers every year of the past three years to manage a growing student population. Due to the county's development and growth, nonpoint source pollution and stormwater runoff are issues faced at HES that are being addressed by our students.



First graders at Hedgesville Elementary plant native plants in the school's new rain garden with the help of two local organizations.

Hedgesville Elementary School's Dedication to Environmental Education

Unlike other states within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, West Virginia does not have Environmental Literacy Standards. Despite this, Hedgesville Elementary School recognizes the benefits of outdoor and environmental education and has worked to incorporate those within its curriculum. To further prepare their students for the limitless opportunities offered post-graduation, HES has decided to participate in their first MWEE with its 1st and 2nd grade classes to directly address environmental issues and encourage stewardship.

Student Voice and Student Choice

The students at HES use the track and field area every day they can, so they were quick to observe pollution and the waterlogged grass after rain events. The students were determined to act and the MWEE framework supports this specifically by emphasizing student voice and learner-centered experiences. With their environmental issue identified, HES collaborated with community partners including Cacapon Institute and Berkeley County Public Service Stormwater District to investigate stormwater runoff and best management practices for mitigation. Installing a rain garden was the solution selected and implemented by HES as it beautifies the schoolyard, reduces the pollution entering our local streams, and creates habitat for

pollinators.

Highlights

- » Hedgesville Elementary School conducted a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience to address the school's stormwater runoff issue and to highlight the relationship between humans and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.
- » This was Hedgesville Elementary School's first MWEE. Plans are currently in the work to sustain activity at the rain garden site by creating and posting student made signs about the conservation project.
- » Partnerships with non-profit organizations and governmental groups can provide expertise and assist in education that is aligned with state standards.
- » The MWEE process allowed students to work across disciplines, covering several school subjects including science, language arts, mathematics, art, and more.

Lessons Learned

- Support and active participation are needed across the board from the principal to the teachers to the maintenance staff.
- Use partnerships from local organizations to enhance the learning experience and gain expertise.
- MWEEs deepen student learning and give students the confidence to address real world problems.
- Sustained activity is the goal! Maintaining your action project is essential. So be sure to consider this when implementing your action project. Perhaps partner with local groups or scouts to ensure your project is getting the proper upkeep.

“One of the things I really love about this is the **collaboration** because it helps show students the environment is important to everyone and people do care.”

— Melissa Hollen, HES Principal



The rain garden installed by Hedgesville Elementary School's first and second graders is the first of hopefully many MWEEs.