



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

January 22, 2016

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Executive Order 42: Virginia Environmental Literacy Challenge

The Virginia Department of Education is pleased to announce the official launch of the **Virginia Environmental Literacy Challenge**, a K-12 education program established via [Executive Order 42](#) and coordinated by the [Virginia Resource-Use Education Council](#).

Through this Executive Order, Governor McAuliffe directed Virginia's resource and education agencies to complement and support the Commonwealth's current environmental education efforts by establishing the long-term vision that:

1. Virginia's students graduate with the knowledge and skills to make informed environmental decisions;
2. educators responsible for instruction about the environment have access to sustained professional development opportunities, tools, and resources that support efforts to provide students with high-quality environmental education; and
3. Virginia schools maintain their buildings, grounds, and operations to support positive environmental and human health outcomes.

The Environmental Literacy Challenge is comprised of two elements: 1) the Conservation Classroom Challenge; and 2) the Environmental Literacy Challenge for Systemic Sustainability. Both challenges are focused on K-12 education, the former at the classroom and the latter at school divisions. Each challenge works toward meeting the Governor's vision for environmental literacy and includes the opportunity for educators to be recognized for their important K-12 environmental literacy efforts.

1. The [Conservation Classroom Challenge](#) (CCC) is focused at the classroom level and encourages individual teachers to engage students in innovative environmental learning and educational programs, ultimately supporting and building environmental literacy in their students. Teachers interested in meeting this challenge should visit this site for a list of challenges they can use to engage their students. (Teachers may also create their own environmental learning challenges.) Once teachers and students have met the challenges they have chosen, the teachers' schools will receive certificates signed by Governor McAuliffe as recognition of their efforts.

For more information, please contact Suzie Gilley, wildlife educator, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, by e-mail at Suzie.Gilley@dgif.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 367-0188.

2. The [Environmental Literacy Challenge for Systemic Sustainability](#) (ELCSS) challenges school divisions to develop a systemic approach to the promotion and improvement of environmental literacy and

environmental health. The division application is based on three key goal areas, each with indicators of a systemic approach. These goal areas include:

- a. improving K-12 environmental and sustainability education programs;
- b. improving the environmental health of students school staff; and
- c. reducing the environmental impact and costs of school buildings and grounds.

A school division will use the indicators in each of the three goal areas of the application (structured as a self-assessment) to identify strengths and to build a holistic narrative that explains its efforts and successes. The indicators should serve to focus an articulated description of what and how the division is achieving in the specific goal area. The application, limited to six narrative pages, should provide data whenever possible, to support its description.

School division applications will be reviewed by an expert panel from the Virginia Resource-Use Education Council and its partners. School division awardees will receive a certificate signed by the Governor and presented at the Virginia Board of Education's September 2016 meeting in Richmond.

School divisions interested in working toward this challenge and describing their efforts and successes should visit the link above for the ELCSS application and additional information.

If you have questions about the Environmental Literacy Challenge for Systemic Sustainability, please contact J. Michael Foreman, director, Office of Environmental Education, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, by e-mail at Mike.Foreman@dcr.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 786-3088.

If you have questions about the Environmental Literacy, please contact Eric M. Rhoades, director, Office of Science and Health Education, by e-mail at Eric.Rhoades@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 786-2481.

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