

MD Green Schools Progress Evaluation

Evaluation Context

Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) leads the Maryland Green Schools (MDGS) program, providing infrastructure, support, and a rigorous review process to award qualifying schools across the state as a Maryland Green School. 2019 legislation provided funding to expand efforts to support schools toward sustainability. With this, MAEOE has a goal to support 50% of schools to be Green Schools.

Evaluation tracks year-to-year progress toward that goal through comparative analyses of schools awarded as MD Green Schools (MAEOE's historic and ongoing data) with statewide data of all schools (available through NCES databases) and data of participation in MAEOE professional development programs.

MAEOE showed areas of progress in its efforts to develop and expand the number of Green Schools and support teachers with professional development, all of which is meant to support a larger goal of students' environmental literacy.

In its second year of state funding, the MDGS program showed key areas of progress toward its target of having 50% of Maryland schools awarded and maintaining MDGS status. While growth tends to be incremental from year-to-year, and more can be done to expand efforts, the evidence suggests several indicators of positive movement. The three main takeaways are summarized to the right.

This year, evaluation added analysis of the professional development offerings provided by MAEOE, including the expanded reach of trainings to more educators and the degree to which those trainings supported educators in achieving MD Green School awards for their schools.

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36% of MD Schools are Green Schools

This metric continues to show promise and progress toward MAEOE's goal of having half of all schools in the state (public and private) awarded as Green Schools. In public schools, the program is getting close to meeting that goal already – **44% of all public schools are Green Schools**. Moreover, nine counties have already achieved the 50% goal in their public schools

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Signs of Improvement in Eastern Counties

A goal identified this year was to improve the reach of the program in Maryland's far eastern and western counties. In 2022, there was promising evidence of growth in two counties. Cecil County increased its percentage of public schools with awards to the 50% mark. More impressively, Worcester County added a number schools, moving from 29% of all public schools awarded to 46% awarded.

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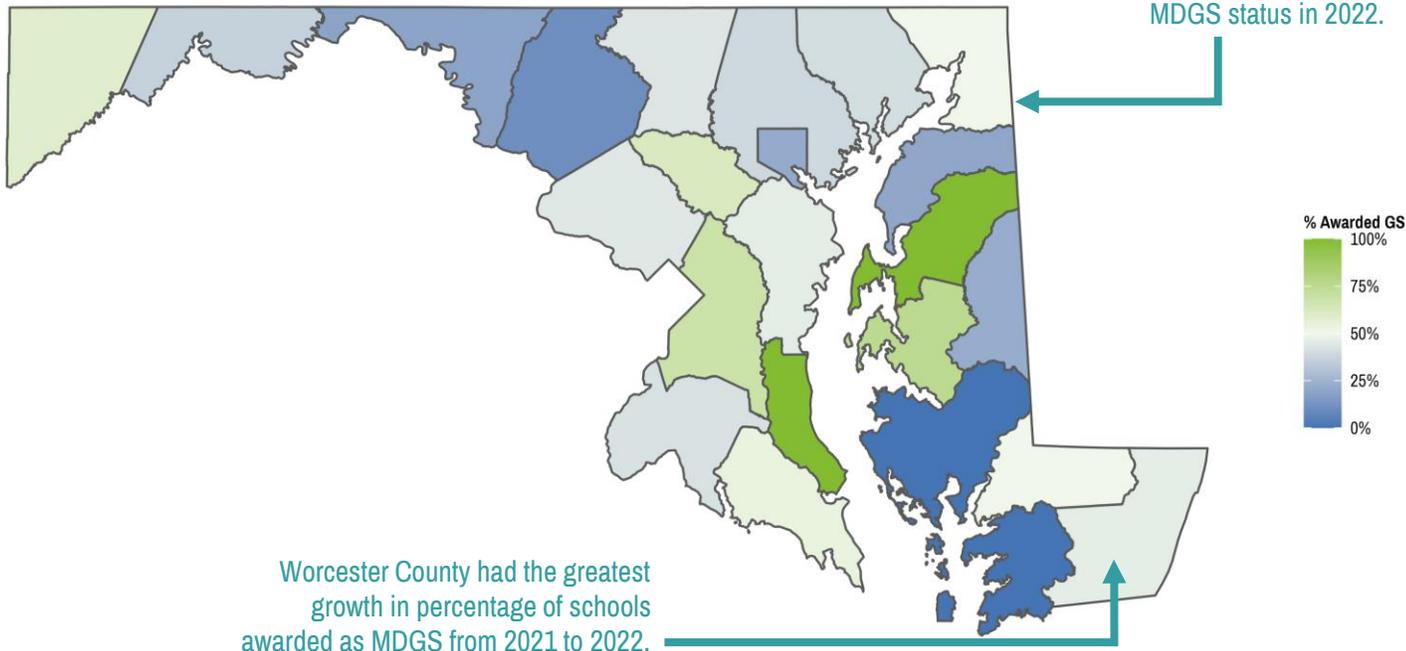
Trainings Support MDGS Applicants

Analysis of MAEOE's data of who has attended professional development over the last 2-3 years showed that around half of schools that participated in training ultimately were successful at applying and being awarded or re-awarded their Green School status in the last three years. The next largest segment of participants are schools that would be completely new to the program – an important segment to convert to achieve MDGS goals.

Proportion of public schools, by county, that are MD Green Schools

This heat map depicts which counties have the highest percentage of their public schools awarded (bright green), and which counties have the lowest percentage of public school awarded (bright blue).

Cecil County newly achieved 50% of public schools awarded MDGS status in 2022.



Key Considerations for Next Year



Supporting Old Sites & Attracting New

Due to the automatic extensions granted over the last several years (in response to COVID impacts), the 145 schools currently in an extension period should be high-priority candidates for follow-up and support to help them get back on track for 2023. To further grow the program, the second priority would be strategies to recruit new schools into the program for their first award.



Supporting the Eastern Shore Counties

While there were positive signs in some of the eastern counties of Maryland, three Eastern Shore counties continue to show very limited engagement with either the professional development or award process – Kent, Somerset, and Dorchester. These counties likely need special attention to their unique needs, if the program seeks to make inroads here.



Urban & Less Affluent Schools

An area for growth is schools in urban and/or less affluent communities, which are generally less well-represented among Green Schools. Conversations with partners and schools in these settings could help understand how the program and environmental education are perceived and how the program's approach could better align with these schools' priorities, strengths, and needs.