**Media Contact:** Laura Johnson Collard**,** director@maeoe.org

**For Immediate Release**

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**Maryland Green School Program Grows to 666 Schools During a Year of COVID -19 Challenges**

***Representing 32% of Maryland Schools***

**Baltimore, MD** – Today, the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) announced the number of Maryland Green Schools grew to 666 during the 2020/21 academic year, representing 32% of all schools in the state and an addition of 11 new schools. Of the 70 successful applications, 47 schools recertified their Maryland Green School status. 12 schools achieved “sustainable” Maryland Green Schools status for participation in the program for 14 years. MAEOE also announced that one new Green Center joined their network of more than 40 organizations supporting the Green Schools program. Their environmental programs positively impact students, teachers, and communities.

In a very challenging year for our schools, where most students attended virtual classes or had limited access to school buildings and school grounds, the 2020/21 Maryland Green Schools have achieved remarkable environmental accomplishments. They have 36,369 gallons of water; reduced energy use by 7,297,118 Kwh; prevented waste from going to a landfill by recycling 721,449 lbs of material; created 16,070 square feet of natural habitat; planted 1,347 native plants, including shrubs and trees; and cleaned 38,470 square feetof streambanks to protect our water quality.

This year outdoor classrooms become part of a prevention strategy for keeping us healthy during the COVID- 19 pandemic. Our schools installed 81 new outdoor classrooms, and our teachers and students used the outdoor classroom 4,246 times. “Our Maryland Green Schools are using the school grounds as an extension of the classroom,” said Laura Johnson Collard, MAEOE executive director. “The CDC urges us to spend time outside of buildings to stay healthy.”

Maryland Green Schools communities, including teachers, staff, and students, work to create a healthy and sustainable environment for everyone. Our students learn to care about the environment and make a positive impact.

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, Maryland Green Schools students have shared their passion for the environment with their families. Students have reported spending time with their families recycling, planting vegetables and native plants, and being more mindful of turning off unnecessary lights.

MAEOE and the Maryland Green School community will celebrate virtually in May and June to recognize awardees.

We congratulate all of the schools that have participated this year! For more information about the Maryland Green Schools program visit [www.maeoe.org](http://www.maeoe.org).

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*MAEOE is a non-profit organization. MAEOEs mission is to encourage, engage and empower the community to understand, responsibly use and promote the natural world. MAEOE’s Maryland Green School program began in 1999. For a complete listing of Green Schools and Green Centers visit* [*www.maeoe.org*](http://www.maeoe.org)*.*