



School Grounds for Learning, Case Study

Outdoor Classrooms: Meadows, Streams, Farm animals

Stage of the Project: Usage/Maintenance

Introduction: Crellin Elementary School, in rural Garrett County, is a small school (~ 134 students, preK to 5th) with a BIG impact on their students and community. Their current staff of only 7 teachers and a teaching principal bring experiential learning and community learning partners to enrich their students' real and relevant instruction beyond their classroom walls, in ways that much bigger schools could only imagine. As a MAEOE Green School (2005, 2009, 2013), Crellin ES is applying to be designated a MAEOE Sustainable Green School. Crellin ES's noteworthy willingness to share their experiences and methods for other schools to learn and model, has been extremely helpful.



Students planting shrubs in their stewardship garden.

The Plan: (courtesy Crellin ES website) Sunshine Farm is part

of Crellin Elementary's instructional programs and serves as a means to teach agriculture and sustainability practices. It is the home of one calf, two goats, two sheep, and sixteen hens. Students bottle feed the calf twice a day and feed the other animals as well. They clean the barns and the barnyards and collect the eggs which are used in the school. The wool from their sheep is sheared then washed and carded by students. They sell the clean wool and are learning

how to spin it with their new spinning wheel. Students love to play with the animals on the playground located in the barnyard.

Their Environmental Education Laboratory is their outdoor classroom. It includes Snowy Creek, a wetland, meadow, hemlock forest, and vernal ponds. Students spend time in these ecosystems learning the unique value of each and how they are connected. It is the perfect place to participate in real world, place-based learning! Their greenhouse is another location to provide relevant instruction. Students are growing lettuce in a hydroponics system, conducting research, and providing healthy food for the school.

Profile Overview

Crellin Elementary School

Garrett County Public Schools

The Challenge: Many low income students

Adaptation to the Challenge: Staff don't lower expectations of students, instead they find ways to unlock the student's potential



Building Agricultural Responsibility in Our Neighborhood (BARN) supports the school's effort in teaching sustainability practices, research skills and service learning.

Challenges and Adaptations to the Challenge: Crellin ES is a Title I school with a number of low income students, and typical challenges from home accompany students into school. But staff and partners don't lower their expectations or standards, instead they find the experiential ways of unlocking student potential in ways that a typical school may not achieve. Fun, hands on lessons don't seem like burdensome schoolwork, so motivation is not an obstacle. Role models from the school's learning partners allow a team teaching approach, where the staff do not have to be the experts on everything to bring the best lessons to the students.



Fifth grade Students monitor and study the bird boxes throughout the year.



Students are collecting macroinvertebrates during

“Staff and partners don't lower their expectations or standards, instead they find the experiential ways of unlocking student potential in ways that a typical school may not achieve.”

Partners in Success: These projects would not be successful without the help from local partners. Partners include: Local bird club members, Trout Unlimited, Mountain Laurel Garden Club, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Glenville College, retired industry professionals, community historian, and parent volunteers with varied skills.



Students help maintain a bird and butterfly gar-



“All students assist in the vegetable garden. Throughout the summer students and parents use the vegetables at home.” - Crellin's Green School application