



2024-2025 Virginia Watershed Educational Programs

Goals and Objectives

The Mariners' Museum and Park served over 3,900 students through a past grant- funded Mariners' Environmental Co-op from 2021-2024. The experience proved our ability to deliver valuable environmental Educational Enrichment Programs (EEPs) that meet state MWEE requirements and sustain meaningful partnerships with public, private, and non- profit stakeholders. Funding from a previous Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation MWEE grant supported testing and expansion of the next iteration of the program with Hampton City Schools, which we named "Mariners' Lake Stewards". The current grant award is foundational to the sustainability of this initiative, and expands our ability to include serving students and teachers from the York County School Division.

Lake Stewards is an experiential MWEE where students not only learn about issues affecting the watershed in which they live, but are also given the opportunity to consider environmental impacts on the watershed and learn to become part of the solutions for improving its health. The project provides student programming for 9th-grade students from Newport News Public Schools (NNPS), 9th-grade students from Hampton City Schools (HCS), 250 York County School Division (YCSD) 9th-grade students, and professional development for the participating teachers from the districts during the 2024-2025 academic year. The primary objective is to promote environmental literacy and empower students to embrace an active role as environmental stewards.

For the first classroom visits, educators interacted with a total of 1,497 9th grade students: 856 from NNPS, 199 from YCSD, and 442 from HPS. For the onsite field experience, educators served 442 students from NNPS, 168 students from YCSD, and 338 students from HPS. From August 2024 to May 2025, we have provided professional development and support to twenty-seven teachers across the school districts.

We believe strongly in meeting our students “where they are”, and providing for their needs in the program. Spanish-speaking students were able to attend the field trip and participate in the water quality station using their preferred language, with documents our multilingual staff members created. We have also been fortunate to engage with volunteers to assist in additional translation service needs for our program.

Mariners’ collaborates with The Center for Educational Partnerships (TCEP) at Old Dominion University to evaluate the Lake Stewards program. The TCEP team is currently assembling and analyzing data for a report covering the academic year, which will be available in the summer. As part of the evaluation process, students received exit tickets after the conclusion of all three stations on the fall field trips. Preliminary evidence indicated that students were:

- understanding the importance of maintaining the health of the watershed,
- understanding key SOL-content in their exit ticket responses,
- indicating a positive sense of belonging through interest in volunteering at Mariners’, due to content discussed during classroom visits.

Teacher input is intrinsic to the evaluation process. During the fall feedback session, teachers expressed that they value the program and believe that their students value the experience. Teachers also shared that previous program students encouraged current students to participate in the field trip, based on their own positive experiences. Teachers were encouraged by their students’ participation in the program and asked for additional resources to cover in their classrooms, to expand further on topics covered in the Lake Stewards Program.