



No Child Left Inside®  
**VIRGINIA**  
Advancing Environmental Literacy  
in the Commonwealth



## **VIRGINIA NO CHILD LEFT INSIDE COALITION FACT SHEET**



Photo by Chesapeake Bay Foundation

The Virginia No Child Left Inside Coalition is a collaborative effort comprised of numerous education, conservation, business, health care, and sporting organizations joined in a common goal of getting students more active outside. This can range from simple outdoor play to teaching our youth the importance of forming a bond with our environment and working towards stewardship.

Environmental education, combined with meaningful outdoor experiences, provides opportunities for students and youth to develop environmental awareness and the abilities they will need to act as conscientious stewards. They also will learn to address the world's increasingly complex environmentally based challenges they will face as future citizens, parents, voters, and leaders.

### **Why is it important?**

As citizens, we have a responsibility to provide future generations with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to make informed environmental decisions that are certain to be part of their future. Stewardship is everyone's responsibility, and now is the time to ensure that our students achieve the environmental literacy necessary to keep Virginia a naturally rich place to live and work. Key to any long-term plan to protect and restore Virginia's waterways and other natural resources is an educated citizenry. Today's young people must understand the connections between the natural world and humankind, and the necessity of environmental stewardship.

### **Preparing for the Future**

Business leaders increasingly recognize the positive impacts of systemic environmental and outdoor education in preparing today's young people to succeed in a 21st Century workforce. Environmental education is inquiry-based, helping students to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills essential to successful business practices. Moreover, the global market for environmental products and services alone—renewable energy generation and energy efficiency, recycling and waste management, water supply, and other resource management—is projected to double by 2020.

### **The Facts**

The current generation of children is developing in a new-age world. While the advancements of communications and technology have undoubtedly improved our lives in numerous ways, the negative impacts on children are also evident. The average child can recognize over 1000 corporate logos but identify less than 12 species of plants or animals in their backyard. They spend over seven hours daily in front of an electronic screen or in a similarly structured setting, often spending less than 7 minutes of their day being active outside. A majority of voters in Virginia agree that our youth need to engage more in their outside environment. The best way to achieve this is to begin with education.

## What is Environmental Education?

Environmental Education is the study of the relationships between dynamic and natural human systems. It focuses on several key areas to provide students with a thorough and broad approach to learning about the environment. Particular emphasis is put on providing students with hands on experience, bringing them out into the field in conjunction with classroom learning. Environmental education offers life long experience and practical information about the natural world around them. It combines many disciplines of education and builds team working and higher level thinking skills to approach and solve problems.

Perhaps most notably, it creates a capacity for stewardship in the environment while promoting good citizenship that can make the world a better place to live and build a lifelong appreciation and respect for the environment.



Photo by Chesapeake Bay Foundation

## The Benefits of Environmental Education

Environmental education has been proven to improve a child's mental, academic, physical, and emotional well-being. Schools with these programs have noted higher scores on tests focusing on math, reading, writing, and listening. There is also an inherent enhancement of social interactions and the value of building close relationships with peers and the community.

Outdoor play and engagement increases fitness levels while building active, healthy bodies for our children. It also establishes the importance of a healthy lifestyle at an early age. Childhood obesity rates have more than doubled within the last 20 years and the United States has become the largest consumer of ADHD medications in the world, while pediatric prescriptions for antidepressants have risen dramatically. Regular activity can help children avoid the problems associated with these issues and work towards healthier lives. Outdoor play has also been associated with an increase of Vitamin D levels, which helps protect children against bone problems, heart disease, and diabetes, while reducing stress and anxiety.

## Get Involved

Check out some of the numerous organizations across Virginia involved in the No Child Left Inside Coalition. Want to be involved? Membership involves no dues; attendance to meetings and conferences is voluntary. The only requirement is a passion to support environmental education and advocacy for the community, government, and most importantly, our youth.

To join the cause, contact Elysa Mills at [emills@cbf.org](mailto:emills@cbf.org) or visit our website at [www.vncli.org](http://www.vncli.org).

Caretakers of God's Creation  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
Claytor Nature Center of Lynchburg  
College  
Friends of the Rappahannock  
Garden Club of Virginia  
Hampton Roads Alliance for  
Environmental Education  
James River Association  
Lynnhaven River NOW  
Mary Baldwin College  
Mid-Atlantic Marine Education  
Association MAMEA

Norfolk Southern  
Old Dominion University, Center for  
Educational Partnerships, Darden  
College of Education  
Rice Rivers Center at Virginia  
Commonwealth University  
Sentara Healthcare  
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Church  
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Virginia Association of Soil and  
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Virginia Beach City Public Schools  
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