

Attraction

The Good News Magazine

Teaching Outside the Classroom

Countless studies have proven that students don't have to be in a traditional classroom to learn. Encouraging teachers to move the structured classroom setting outside is a growing trend in the education field. Students need to explore their natural surroundings in order to appreciate the importance of preserving the planet's resources.

Environmental Concern (EC), based in St. Michaels since 1972, is a non-profit, wetland focused organization. EC has been helping schools create schoolyard wetland habitats as outdoor classrooms for more than a decade. Environmental Concern's educators have been opening the doors and letting the children "out" of the classroom to explore nature long before it was recognized as a beneficial method of teaching. The *Planning of Wetlands (POW!)* curriculum involves students, teachers and the school community in every step of the process - from the first workshop with the teachers, to maintaining the schoolyard habitat as a living classroom.

Once the schoolyard wetland habitat has been constructed it can be used as a learning resource for many subjects. Hands-on learning is what the education department at EC is all about. EC works with teachers to ensure that they are comfortable with their schoolyard

habitat, and species that live there by offering additional trainings in *The Wonders of Wetlands (WOW!)* and other lessons and workshops.

Environmental Concern has worked with several partners in Talbot County: building a rain garden with the Master Gardeners at the Talbot Ag Center; designing and planting a wildflower meadow at Easton Elementary School; and constructing a habitat garden with the students at St. Michaels Elementary School. EC received grant funding for the 2010-2011 school year from the Waterfowl Festival to work with a school or educational facility to complete the process of building a schoolyard habitat. The facility will receive training in *POW!* and *WOW!* - both publications authored by Environmental Concern - and will receive step by step technical support from Environmental Concern to help create the project - involving the students from the design stage to the final planting of the habitat.

Environmental Concern is ready to help a school connect students to nature and to the Chesapeake Bay. The lessons learned from these interactions with the natural world will turn students "inside out," and encourage them to be environmental stewards. For more information, visit www.wetland.org.



Students at Easton Elementary planted a wildflower meadow at the school, with the help of Environmental Concern.