

[HB 997](#) - Green Schools - Model Professional Development Facilities - Designation

I come before you as a Montgomery County Public Schools parent and co-chair of the Montgomery County Council of PTAs Sustainability and Green Schools subcommittee. In my day job, I am a science curriculum specialist at the Center for K12 Science at Lawrence Hall of Science, UC Berkeley.

In my work as a curriculum specialist, I develop student-led hands-on science curriculum that empowers critical thinking and connections to place. I have worked with teachers across the country to support them successfully using their schoolyard as part of their classrooms. I have also worked with districts and organizations like Green Schoolyards America to implement these innovations.

In my MCCPTA advocacy, I have become intimately aware of the essential infrastructure to the MD Green Schools program offers community advocates to collaborate closely with MCPS staff. MCPS Division of Sustainability and Compliance are committed to achieving 50% school participation and both the MCPS Student Climate Action Council and our committee are working to create the support systems to push that goal towards 100% like PGCPs.

Outdoor learning and connections to place improves mental health and academic performance and the MDGS program facilitates these initiatives. Fostering collaboration within and between districts would be an incredible opportunity for Maryland schools and students.

Increased time outdoors can improve [student health and wellbeing](#)¹, which translates to improved [attention](#)² and [engagement and behavior back indoors](#)³. In addition, more time outdoors during the school day has been correlated with [improved teacher job satisfaction](#)⁴.

Inclusive opportunities for students to learn outdoors increases [enthusiasm, self-motivation, and academic performance](#)⁵. Outdoor learning can also [address gender achievement gaps](#)⁶.

Exposure to green space is a simple and powerful way to improve student mental health with minimal cost or staffing considerations. Additionally, participation in problem solving climate issues is a huge benefit for children struggling to cope with the growing climate crises, [a major contributing factor of teen mental health struggles](#)⁷.

Please continue to invest in the MDGS Program. HB 977 elevation of “Model Professional Development Facilities” for strong MDGS schools celebrates success and expands the reach of the program through mentorship and collaboration. This is the kind of creative connections we need to look for that multiply our investments.

Students want Green Schools and climate curriculum and tangible action opportunities. Parents want innovative school cultures. Schools that build culture and systems around the Green Schools model are flourishing.

Thank you for your consideration.



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Citations for hyperlinks above

1. Green Schoolyards America - [Health Benefits and Guidance](#)
2. Berman M.G., Jonides, J., and Kaplan, S. (2009) [The Cognitive Benefits of Interacting With Nature](#). Psychological Science. 19(12):1207-12
3. Kuo, M., Browning, M.H., and Penner, M.L. (2018) [Do Lessons in Nature Boost Subsequent Classroom Engagement? Refueling Students in Flight](#). Frontiers in Psychology. Vol 8
4. Science Daily News (2019) [An hour or two of outdoor learning every week increases teachers' job satisfaction](#).
5. Lieberman, G.A. and Hoody, L.L. 1998. [Closing the Achievement Gap: Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning. Executive Summary](#).
6. Stevenson, K.T., Szczytko, R.E., Carrier, S.J. and Peterson, N.M. (2021) [How outdoor science education can help girls stay engaged with science](#). International Journal of Science Education. 42(7)
7. Thompson, T. 2021. [Young people's climate anxiety revealed in landmark survey](#). Nature