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## **Virginia Students Tackle Environmental Quality Issues *Service-Learning Projects Stress Science, Technology, Engineering & Math***

Students in a dozen Virginia school divisions will combine learning and environmental stewardship as they research, design and carry out projects emphasizing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The students will be participating in “service-learning” experiences and projects funded through Learn and Serve America grants awarded by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).

“Service learning connects classroom instruction with opportunities for meaningful service to the community,” said Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Patricia I. Wright. “Students learn that they can make a difference.”

The service-learning projects are designed to raise student achievement — especially among at-risk students — while promoting good citizenship and service to the community. Most of the projects involve partnerships with colleges and universities, government agencies, businesses and non-profit organizations. The grants total \$276,455 and will fund the following projects:

- **Charlotte County (Randolph-Henry High School Learn and Serve Project)** — Students from Randolph-Henry High School will investigate recycling, conservation and outdoor design through STEM projects in partnership with Britthaven Nursing Home, the Early Learning Center and county government.
- **Cumberland County (New Beginnings Community Service Project)** — Cumberland County High School students will incorporate STEM learning as they design, build and maintain community gardens and address obesity and other community health issues.
- **Grayson County (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle)** — Students at Fries Middle School and Independence Middle School will conduct a feasibility study on recycling and design sustainable recycling facilities in partnership with local government, the Declaration newspaper, Mathews State Park and the Virginia Department of Forestry.
- **Montgomery County (STEM Service-Learning: A Collaborative Middle School Model)** — Middle school students, beginning with Shawsville Middle School, will develop and direct service-learning projects emphasizing biotechnology and robotics in partnership with Virginia Tech.
- **Nottoway County (Enhancing Student Life Through STEM)** — Intermediate, middle and high school students will design solar cells, construct a recycling drop-off site and explore alternative fuels in partnership with Longwood University, Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District, Virginia Cooperative Extension Service and Virginia Teach.
- **Page County (WaterDawks & AirPups Sniff Out Pollution (Page County))** — Students from Luray High School and Luray Middle School will analyze air and water quality, design a tool to harness wind power and carry out STEM projects related to watershed erosion and recycling. Project partners are Cacapon Institute, James Madison University, Lord Fairfax Community College, Shenandoah National Park, University of Virginia and Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

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- **Russell County (From STEM to Community)** — Russell County Career and Technical Center students will employ STEM knowledge and skills to design and build solar panels, a portable greenhouse, heating, cooling and watering systems and conduct cost-benefit analyses. Project partners are Clinch River Farms, Clinch Valley Soil and Water Conservation District, Lebanon Master Gardeners, Virginia Cooperative Extension Service and Wildwood Construction.
- **Tazewell County (Outdoor Discovery Classroom)** — Tazewell High School students will design and construct an outdoor classroom and nature center for use by students in all grade levels. Partners are the Clinch Valley Bird Club, Southwest Virginia Community College, Tazewell Master Gardeners, Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and Virginia Department of Forestry.
- **Martinsville (Classroom to Community with STEM)** — Martinsville High School students will undertake STEM projects related to energy and the environment, including designing solar panels, researching alternative energy sources and waste management. Partners are City of Martinsville, Danville Science Center, Earth Force, Renewable Engineered Systems, NASA, Old Dominion University, Virginia Museum of Natural History and Virginia Tech.
- **Virginia Beach (Chesapeake Bay Restoration: Four Natural Filters)** — Plaza Middle School students will engage in forest, oyster and aquatic vegetation restoration and design an outdoor nature trail. Partners are Oyster Reed Keepers of Virginia Inc and Virginia Institute of Marine Science.
- **Chesapeake (Success Through Synergy with Service)** — Students from Western Branch Middle School, Western Branch High School, Oscar Smith Middle School and Indian River Middle School will track box turtles using global positioning technology, design and construct rain gardens and shad and trout nurseries, restore oyster beds, and investigate the economics of the bay. Partners are the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Elizabeth River Project, Hoffer Creek and Wildlife Foundation, Oyster Reef Keepers of Virginia Inc., Trout Unlimited and Virginia Port Authority.
- **Prince William County (Of the Student, By the Student, For the Student)** — Stonewall Jackson Middle School students will combine STEM, history and the fine arts in projects related to the 150th anniversary of the First Battle of Manassas. Partners are the Journey Through Hallowed Ground, Manassas National Battlefield Park and the Prince William County Board of Supervisors.

Eventually, the Learn and Serve America grant-funded projects will involve an estimated 3,200 students from schools with high concentrations of at-risk students.

The Learn and Serve America grant program is funded by the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#), an independent federal agency created in 1993. The service-learning experiences and projects also are supported with matching funds provided by the participating school divisions and partnering organizations.

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