



Superintendents' Environmental
Education Collaborative

Growing Future-Ready Students: How Environmental Education Advances District Priorities

August 19, 2026

[Link to the recording](#)

[Link to eePRO Post](#)

Speakers

Dr. Karen Cheser, superintendent, Durango School District, Colorado:
kcheser@durangoschools.org

Clark Seipt, Director of Sustainability, Loudoun County Public Schools, Virginia: clark.seipt@lcps.org

Ana Leirner, Sr. Director, Professional Learning and PLT Products, PLT:
Ana.Leirner@forests.org

Megan Fink, Partnerships & Policy Manager, NAAEE: megan@naaee.org

Resources

- Explore ways to bring EE to your school or district with PLT: <https://www.plt.org/schools>
- Join SEEC: <https://forms.gle/gY6M7zfSXskNzVYj8>
- Browse all of the amazing research available from eeWORKS here: <https://naaee.org/programs/eeworks/benefits-k12-students>
- Read more about the Durango SOIL Outdoor Learning Lab here: <https://naaee.org/programs/seec/resources-programs/durango-school-district-9rs-soil-outdoor-learning-lab>
- LCPS Sustainability Framework (22 page PDF): https://drive.google.com/file/d/14ATZ5y1GtaX_xdmFvEeZsn-h3n7F9tkl/view
- Use these student investigations from PLT to support your Green Teams (free downloads!): <https://www.plt.org/greenschools/student-investigations/>
- Learn more about SEEC here: <https://naaee.org/programs/seec>
- You can learn more about the Seal of Climate Literacy here: <https://sealofclimateliteracy.org/>
- Please join us at the annual NAAEE Conference: <https://conference.naaee.org/>
- Watch the Grow Dome video later: <https://www.soillab.org/phase-2>
- Direct link to LCPS Green Teams Gallery Walk (64 slides) - talk about inspiration!!! https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UpYVWV2eQzKD9cXppCmObOR_4HHI7AGWB/view
- Explore more about the 5Cs included in the profile of an LCPS Graduate: <https://www.lcps.org/o/dtl/page/profile-of-a-graduate>
- Want to learn more about MWEES? Check out this free, self-guided online course made possible by NAAEE and NOAA: <https://eeepro.naaee.org/learning/mwee-101-introduction-meaningful-watershed-educational-experience>
- Culbert Elementary Introduces New Belonging Garden: https://www.loudounnow.com/news/culbert-elementary-introduces-new-belonging-garden/article_6ef9d990-df8a-4312-8b3d-23d529aa1579.html



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Highlights of the Chat Transcript

Introductions

Denise Mason:

Hi everyone!

Megan Fink, she/her, NAAEE:

Welcome, welcome! Thanks for being here!!

Teresa Lloro:

Teresa, Cal Poly Pomona, Professor.

Roberta Hunter:

Roberta Hunter from NJ

Taylor Ruffin:

Hello! Taylor Ruffin with Earth Force based in Denver, CO

Eileen Boekestein:

Hi! Eileen Boekestein, logging in from Grand Rapids MI

Stephanie Gray - CELF:

Stephanie from Houston, with Childrens Environmental Literacy Foundation

Kathy Mc Glaufflin:

Kathy McGlaufflin, Virginia,

Amalia Sollars:

Amalia Sollars, K-8 Enrichment Programs Coordinator for Northside ISD in San Antonio, TX

Sara Jose:♥

Shannon Fredebaugh-Siller:

Shannon, Heritage Conservancy, PA

Denise Mason:

Denise Mason, MS Museum of Natural Science- Jackson MS

Carol Cavell:

Hi - I'm Ann Ehinger with Trees Indiana, a non-profit in Indiana :)

Chrissy Brownson:

Chrissy Brownson, Fairfax County Public Schools, just outside of DC

Eric Byers:😊

Sheba Abernathy:

Sheba Abernathy, from Chicago

Emily Weigel:

Emily, Atlanta, Georgia at Georgia Tech/Girl Scouts :)

Teresa Lloro:

Southern CA

Andrea Stay:

Andrea Stay, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and PLT Coordinator

Bryan Walker:

Bryan Walker, Carson City, NV.

Valerie Bandell:

Valerie, Hershey, PA Agricultural and Environmental Curriculum Developer

Kelly Gay:

Kelly Gay, Tryon, NC

Liz Bullock:



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Hi everyone! Excited to be here. Joining from Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, MD

Karin Espinosa:

Karin Espinosa from Houston TX

Stephanie Gray - CELF:♥

Nicole Filizetti:

Hello! Nicole with LEAF and Wisconsin PLT, zooming from Duluth

Maria Pfister:

Maria Pfister from Bristol, Wi

ANDREA WRIGHT:

Hello from Louisville, Kentucky

Elise Trelegan:

Hi everyone! Elise from NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office - Eastern Shore MD!

Dawn Stuckey:

Greetings from the Lowcountry of South Carolina!

Clark Seipt:

Clark Seipt - Loudoun County Public Schools, Virginia

kristen shelton:

kristen Shelton, Norman, Oklahoma

Meredith Lemke:

Hi! Meredith Lemke, calling in from Annapolis, MD

Sara Jose:

Hi from Corpus Christi, TX

Amalia Sollars:✋

Erica Clark:

Hello from Central New York!

Jennifer Mutch, she/her:

Hi everyone- I am in San José, CA- off camera for a bit to eat lunch :)

Eric Byers:

Eric Byers, Henrico County Public Schools in Virginia

Krysta Hougen-Ryall:

Krysta, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, Maryland

Lauren Paulet:

Lauren Paulet-Miller , City of Frederick MD, Sustainability Department

Leigh Taylor:

Leigh Taylor from Moultrie, GA . I am an interventionist for K-5 . I'm also the chairperson of the STEM Club at my school.

Anne Umali, NAAEE:

Hi from Wilmington, NC ☀

Janet Ady:

Janet Ady, Myersville, MD, Mobilize Frederick Education Group

Andrea Corpolongo:

My name is Andrea. I'm an Environmental Educator from Boone County, Kentucky

Danielle Ardrey:

Hello from Fort Collins, CO!

Lisa Yemma NC Museum of Natural Sciences at Whiteville:

Hi there! Lisa Yemma from Whiteville, North Carolina. Manager of Education at the NC Museum of Natural Sciences at Whiteville



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Jady Kralovic:

Jady - Maryland, informal environmental edu at a Public Garden

Rosemary Prince:

Rosemary Prince, Tallahassee, FL , Consultant and Trainer

Barbara Georgia:

Hi Everyone! Barbara Boler, Georgia

Asah Glover:

Hi everyone! I'm from Charlotte, NC.

Maddie Harris:

Hello from the amazing Oak Openings Region of Toledo, Ohio!

Melissa Taggart:

Hi! Melissa from Project Learning Tree in Washington, DC

Ben Lepley:

Hi from Los Angeles!

Preethi Mony:

Hello from Columbus, OH

Emily Gochis:

Hello from Ann Arbor, Michigan!

Lance Martin:

Hello from Phoenix!

Karrie Marti:

Hello from Walled Lake, Michigan

Lisa Rivard:

Hi from East China, Michigan.

Kayla Stuart:

Hello from Knoxville, TN! Kayla here from Tree CPR

Elizabeth Gutierrez:

Hello from San Antonio Texas 😊 - Environmental Educator at the Edwards Aquifer
Authority Education Outreach Center.

Sara Jose:♥

Amalia Sollars:👋

Janina Millis:

Hi from NC!!

Kate McLynn:

Kate McLynn here, hi! from DC!

Sarah Provost - Strawtown Studio:

Greetings Everyone! I'm here with Strawtown Studio - an arts and nature and
outdoor learning group in the lower Hudson Valley, Rockland County NY.

<https://strawtownstudio.org/>

**Icebreaker: What was your spark? What experience first made you see the power of
environmental education?**

Preethi Mony:

birding and nature hikes with nature club at college

Roberta Hunter:

Working with students in Philly in their neighborhoods and at our center.



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Janet Ady:♥

Sheba Abernathy:

I found my spark by being introduced to stewarding a couple of prairies in Illinois.

Carol Cavell:♥

Judy Braus:👉

Carol Cavell:

Taking a group of Boys and Girls Club students into the woods for their first time who were scared to enter but 5 minutes in didn't want to leave. It was the spark in their eyes that hooked me.

Judy Braus:👉

Karrie Martin:

My third grade teacher! She built our year of learning around Monarchs... Life changing!

Carol Cavell, Lauren Paulet:♥

Leigh Taylor:

I grew up on my grandfather's 200 acre farm, so I have always been involved with nature. I absolutely love to be outdoors!

Christine Miller:

I was a summer camp counselor in Boston, and some of the teens who enrolled in our camp had never seen the ocean. And I was so surprised, in a coastal city! It opened my eyes to inequities in EE and made me want to tackle those gaps as I've moved from city to city

Judy Braus:👉

Kelly Gay:

Visiting Stony Creek Metropark in Michigan when I was a child. They offered wonderful environmental ed programs for children.

ANDREA WRIGHT:

Taking students with behavioral challenges to the garden when others doubted doing so and how they thrived in this environment.

Lauren Paulet:♥

Lauren Paulet:

I ran a compost learning program with an afterschool STEM class. A few weeks later I was working a National Night Out community event and ran into one of my students. She brought me a banana peel to compost! It reaffirmed to me that good teaching sticks and leads to behavior change :)

Jaclyn Stallard:♥

Janet Ady:😊

Hayley Reynolds:

Working in the EE field during college and seeing the power that hands on learning in the field offers for multi language learners to find a shared language and passion.

Judy Braus:♥

Stephanie Gray - CELF:

exploring where our food comes from first as a farmer, then as an urban EE - connecting systems and our place in nature with students!

Judy Braus:👉

Elizabeth Gutierrez:

I found my Spark as an intern under a person who was teaching me about



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Environmental Education. I stood in a Texas River with students looking for macroinvertebrates and I know this was going to become my passion. Now I'm nearly 15 years going!

Lauren Paulet:♥

Judy Braus:👉

Jennifer Mutch, she/her:

So many sparks, but my first one was growing up near a National Park area and being able to go outside on hiking trails, climbing oak trees and my parents let us explore outside

Judy Braus:♥

Lauren Paulet:♥

Maddie Harris:

I started working at zoos in my state that do local conservation work and facilitate educational programs around those initiatives! Fell in love with environmental education there and continued that love into my career.

Judy Braus:👉

Janet Ady:

A wonderful wealth of environmental and outdoor education opportunities as a child, and seeing that lead to sustainable practices in my community.

Lauren Paulet:♥

Judy Braus:👉

Lance Martin:

Taking a summer class at my local university (Western Washington University) as a 4th-grader. It was a one-week marine biology class taught by a university professor and we went all over Puget Sound experiencing marine biology hands-on.

Judy Braus:👉

Meredith Lemke :

Alexandria City, VA had a science summer camp called Camp Winkler at the Winkler Botanical Preserve that was my favorite camp and we'd visit it throughout the school year for field trips too. When a road almost got built across a third of the preserve the students came together to attend public hearings to speak to how much Winkler meant to them and that road didn't get built!

Judy Braus, Lisa Valdivia, Tara Stafford Ocansey:👉

Lisa Yemma NC Museum of Natural Sciences at Whiteville:

I realized EE was a thing when I did an internship with the Nature Conservancy in the Outer Banks of NC in the late 1990s.

Kathy Mc Glaulin, Judy Braus:👉

Rosemary Prince:

Growing up in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey started my path in the outdoors and environmental education.

SJ (she/her)_Earth Force:♥

Questions and Comments for Guest Speakers

Hayley Reynolds:

Karen is the best! She really cares about the pathways for youth engagement and leadership and is building systems that truly affect powerful change for her school district. I



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have had the honor of working with her in a few different ways over the years and it is ALWAYS powerful!

Ana Leirner, Judy Braus:♥

Kathy Mc Glaufflin: 🍌

Lauren Paulet:

I did an independent study in Durango once in college and truly that area is vastly shaped by its environmental history!

Megan Fink, she/her, NAAEE, SJ (she/her)_Earth Force:🌳

Catherine Price:

Could you share more about how the school district staffs these initiatives? Do you have designated sustainability staff or do you work with a nonprofit or other entity?

Lauren Paulet:

Have you considered having a community compost drop off site at the schools?

Grace Manubay:

How are you linking the Portrait of a Graduate with graduation requirements and EE?

Dr. Karen Cheser addressed these questions in real time. Listen to the recording for her response.

Kathy Mc Glaufflin:

Fantastic experience for the students here and in India!

Kate McLynn:

We had a compost drop-off, with a big steel tumbler. Families put their compost in themselves, and then gave it a turn, so it was hands on, & limited "seats" with a "waiting list" for a "seat." It was fun & worked well.

Megan Fink, she/her, NAAEE:

"Paradise for learning" 🌿

Janet Ady:♥

Bryan Walker:

I did my student-teaching at Riverview Elem. :)

Kathy Mc Glaufflin:

Great School System, both my daughters are proud graduates of LCPS!

Megan Fink, she/her, NAAEE:

School Board Resolutions and embedding this work into our districts' strategic plans can be such a game changer!

Lauren Paulet:

Nature for all is how we do the good work!

SJ (she/her)_Earth Force:

wahoo! FCPS!

Chrissy Brownson to Everyone:

Woo Hoo! Hi Clark. Ours is the tree emoji, which is also accessible for screen readers.

Karen Brown:

I love the term 'Belonging Garden'. Would love to hear more.

Clark Seipt: Happy to chat more or connect you with the amazing Green Team Lead there!

Grace Manubay:

Capital funding is being used for the outdoor learning spaces study AND the construction and professional learning?

Clark Seipt: Not the professional learning - I'll use operational funding for that. But



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yes - capital dollars are being used for the exploratory study and design and then hopefully (!!) for the construction.

Lauren Paulet:

Would love to hear more about the geothermal well systems used at LCPS!

Clark Seipt: Happy to chat - my email address is clark.seipt@lcsp.org

Hayley Reynolds | Climate Democracy Initiative | she/her:

Yes! Building confidence with resources and capacity support is absolutely KEY!

Elise Trelegan:

Inspiring, as always, Clark!!

Lauren Paulet:

You have got to bring it back to the why - always. Well done!

Judy Braus:

Thank you Karen and Clark. Such wonderful presentations! The work is inspiring!

Clark Seipt:

We have a school where the PE Teacher leads the school garden! It's a way to engage all types of learners in different kinds of physical activities!

Karen Cheser:

Feel free to connect with me if you have any questions about Durango

kcheser@durangoschools.org

Comments

Melissa Taggart:

PLT and NAAEE make a great team! We are proud to work together 😊

Judy Braus, Jaclyn Stallard, Janet Ady, Anne Umali, NAAEE:♥

Anne Umali, NAAEE:

I used PLT materials as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ecuador...26 years ago 😊

Jaclyn Stallard, Kathy Mc Glaufin, SJ (she/her)_Earth Force:♥

Emily Gochis:

👉 PLT/ Project Wild and Project Wet Trained!

Janet Ady:

Hmm.. Yes, I believe I am familiar with Project Learning Tree.😊 Absolutely LOVE PLT, and have "ever since"...!

Kate McLynn:

PLT has been a huge source of support for me over the years with students!

Selisa Loeza to Everyone:

This was a PHENOMENAL call with inspiring examples backed by action plans.

Jaclyn Stallard:

Two min eval: <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/iFev7b3SFD>

Jaclyn Stallard:

Reach out to Ana anytime, she is the best: Ana.Leirner@forests.org