



We Are Changemakers: Thinking Big, Acting Boldly, and Building the Future

Horizons Hampton Roads served 150 students in grades K–8 at their Portsmouth site through a comprehensive Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) that integrated academics, environmental investigation, and student-led action.

Students engaged in all phases of the MWEE framework—defining local environmental issues, conducting investigations, analyzing data, and taking informed action. Daily lessons focused on key environmental concepts while reinforcing reading, writing, math, and scientific inquiry skills. Throughout the summer program, they explored real challenges impacting their communities, including flooding, pollution, and stormwater runoff, while building connections to the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The work extended beyond the summer through the Super Saturday model, ensuring sustained engagement.

Learning was deepened through field-based experiences and applied investigations where students collected and analyzed data and connected their findings to real environmental systems. All activities remained aligned with MWEE standards and Chesapeake Bay watershed education goals.

Across nine grade levels, students designed and implemented MWEE action projects that addressed real environmental challenges. These projects included rainwater capture systems, native plant installations, recycling initiatives, and community clean-up efforts. The program culminated in student presentations where learners shared their findings and solutions with families and community members, demonstrating both academic growth and increased confidence. The impact extended into the broader community, with over 200 individuals signing a community pledge committing to environmentally responsible actions as a result of student-led outreach.

Students primarily come from under-resourced communities and face both academic and environmental challenges, making access to hands-on, high-quality environmental education especially impactful. Through consistent participation and a supportive learning environment, students were able to fully engage in both the academic and experiential components of the program, strengthening both skill development and connection to their community. Students leave this experience with stronger academic skills, increased

environmental awareness, and the confidence to take action in their communities. They are not only learning about the world around them—they are actively shaping it.

We are grateful to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation for their support in making this work possible and for investing in the next generation of environmental stewards and changemakers.



THANK YOU
*Virginia Department of
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