



INFORMATION & RESOURCES FOR PEARL SCHOOL AWARD PROGRAM

LRNow, a leading environmental non-profit, works to preserve and protect Virginia Beach's waterways through many avenues including advocacy work, restoration projects, and environmental education opportunities. There is much work to be done on all fronts, especially when it comes to VB's youth and spreading awareness of the environmental issues affecting our community. This is why LRNow started the Pearl School Award Program in 2007- to encourage VB teachers to teach local students about local environmental issues and the ways in which they can be part of the solution!

The Pearl School Award Program asks teachers and school administrators to extend environmental education beyond the existing curriculum with opportunities for hands-on, project-based learning to reinforce their students' learning experience. Through the program, teachers provide students with relevant and timely environmental lessons while earning points toward the Pearl School Award. Environmental lessons and service projects in and around schools should focus on environmental concepts such as understanding watersheds with their unique characteristics and problems, water quality and ecosystems functions, and sustainable practices students can incorporate into their own lives. Projects and lessons should encourage and engage students to take an active role in tackling the challenges that their school, local, and regional communities face.

Our hope is that this award creates more sustainable schools, a greater understanding of local environmental problems, and develops a sense of stewardship and environmental ethics in our young citizens.

HOW THE PEARL SCHOOL AWARD PROGRAM WORKS:

The Pearl School Award recognizes schools that provide their students with a variety of environmental activities, exceeding the requirements of their curriculum, and including activities recognized by the program as outlined in this brochure. This is not a competition where schools compete against each other. To earn a Pearl School Award, a school must complete projects that add up to or exceed the required number of points for the school category. These projects must be documented, listing the teacher, and project points. Photos should be submitted along with the application (no more than 5 please.) Having multiple grade levels and teachers involved in these projects is strongly encouraged. This gives the entire school "ownership" of this award and in some cases, additional points are awarded.

POINT REQUIREMENTS		
ELEMENTARY & PRESCHOOLS	MIDDLE SCHOOLS	HIGH SCHOOLS
First Year - 100 points	First Year - 150 points	First Year - 150 points
<i>50 points in subsequent years</i>	<i>75 points in subsequent years</i>	<i>75 points in subsequent years</i>

NOTE:

Schools achieving an award initially must then apply within the next two years to be eligible for the subsequent year scoring requirements. Schools waiting longer than two years must meet the first year's criteria again to receive the next award.

HOW TO EARN POINTS:

Environmental lessons and projects happening during the school year (August-May) are eligible for consideration for that year's Pearl School Award. Each is assigned a point value which is dependent on a few factors including how many students and/or grade-levels are involved as well as the scale and longevity of the action. Large projects completed and receiving maximum credit in its completion year can be counted at half value in subsequent years if the project continues to be maintained, used in a learning capacity, and is documented and explained on the application. Limits may apply to some programs. Schools, teams, and teachers are urged to review this document for ideas and point values.

Group A Projects- 5 points each

One-time interactions or basic environmental projects, such as school-dictated recycling efforts. Group I Projects have no limit, except for the category for individual attendance of workshops or lectures

Group B Projects- 10 points each

Grade level or school-wide interactions and recurring environmental projects, such as regularly scheduled schoolyard trash clean-ups and recycling efforts. 

Group C Projects- 20 points each

School or community-wide programs and projects that have a sustaining impact on the school population and beyond.

Below are some ideas for projects within each category as well as some resources to help you plan and execute those projects. Any ideas for programs and projects not on the list may be submitted in advance for approval.

PROJECT CATEGORIES AND RESOURCES:**Group A Projects-** 5 points each

- Host a program/guest speaker on an environmental topic
- Student and/or teacher participation in a LRNow workshop or lecture
- Reuse paper and “trash” in art classes and classroom projects
- Teacher participation in [Project WET](#), [Project WILD](#), [Project Learning Tree](#), [Beetles Project](#), or other environmental education workshops or courses
- Teacher participation in any LRNow committees with regular attendance
- Plant a native tree on your school grounds (see native plant guide [HERE](#))
- Continued maintenance of Scoop the Poop boxes on school grounds- refilling bags and emptying boxes
- Ongoing school-wide recycling programs (5 points for each type of material recycled, i.e. plastic, paper, electronics, etc.)
- Use of rain barrels (subsequent years; 5 points each, max 15 points)

- Enhance school landscaping/gardens with native plants (5 points per grade level or club that participates up to 15 points) (see native plant guide [HERE](#))
- Help promote LRNow programs through your school's newsletter or social media
- Do a [KidWind activity](#) in school

Group B Projects- 10 points each

- Support an environmental club that meets on a regular basis
- Keep an aquarium to represent your local river
- Build and display a 3-D model of your watershed
- Install Scoop the Poop box(es) on your school grounds (Initial year) (<https://askhrgreen.org/grants/pet-waste-station/>)
- Run a Pearl Home campaign to encourage family participation in our program (with an extra 10 points for the school that gets the most sign-ups during the school year!) Contact education@lrnow.org for guidance on how to start a campaign
- Develop and implement an organic gardening policy for school grounds
- Host or participate in a cleanup event (with [LRNow](#), [Clean the Bay Day](#), [Great American Cleanup](#), or [International Coastal Cleanup](#) day)
- Regular trash/litter removal from school grounds
- Offer a lecture/workshop for school parents to address a school or community environmental issue (ex: single-use plastics, flooding..)
- Use garden space as a community garden
- Conduct a one-time environmental field trip or field study for some or all your students (either on or off school grounds)
- Mentor another school to become a Pearl School for the first time
- Participate in composting or waste-reduction programs in the school cafeteria
- Receive the [Green Ribbon School Award](#)
- Receive the [Virginia Naturally Award](#)
- Perform a trash or energy audit (energy audit kits available to borrow from LRNow)
- Participate in an ongoing community science program (ex: [Feeder Watch](#), [Journey North](#), [Catch the King](#), etc.)
- Continued care of adopted roadway or waterway through the [City of Virginia Beach's Adopt-a-Spot program](#) (subsequent years)
- Continued care for animal habitat/home/boxes (subsequent years)
- Continued maintenance of teaching gardens
- Compete in an official [KidWind challenge event](#)

Group C Projects- 20 points each

- Teach an interdisciplinary unit on watersheds, emphasizing the importance of upstream behavior
- Participate in an oyster gardening project
- Adopt a roadway or waterway through the City of Virginia Beach's Adopt-a-Spot program (First year)

- Partner with local food banks, farmers market, or school cafeteria to use student grown produce
- Sponsor a contest on your watershed using art, poetry, writing, etc.
- Set up a weekly or monthly monitoring program or field study on a local waterway
- Implement a school-wide balloon ban with education for students, parents, staff and faculty
- Build and monitor a home for one or more animals (ex: mason bee boxes, habitat tower, bird boxes, bat homes, etc.) (first year)
- Build a NEW garden on school grounds (first year). Acceptable gardens include rain garden, buffers, stormwater features, organic vegetable/herb garden, pollinator garden, native plant garden, phenology garden, ocean-friendly garden, etc. (see native plant guide [HERE](#))
- Develop a new school-wide program to reduce energy and solid waste beyond school division expectations (20 points for each type of material beyond paper and plastic)

HOW TO APPLY:

Pearl School Awards are distributed at the end of each school year. Award applications **MUST** be submitted by 5pm on the deadline (see website for current deadline) to be eligible for that year's award. Please use the Pearl School Award Tracking Worksheet, found on our website, to keep track of your projects and programs through the school year. Once you have enough points, you can fill out the application.

The application can be found here: <https://www.lynnhavenrivernow.org/teachers-and-students/>

Schools earning Pearl School status for the first time will be awarded a large attractive banner to hang in the lobby of the school. The Pearl School Manager will contact you to arrange a date to formally present this banner. Each year that your school earns their award, a new decal with the dates will be mailed to you to be added to the banner.

To learn more about our Pearl School program, please call us at 757-962-5398 or email Education@LRNow.org.