Reforestation at the Howard County Conservation Property

By Deborah Batzer

A class of 7th grade students at Elkridge Landing Middle School engaged in a service-learning reforestation project by planting trees at the Howard County Conservation Property. This project allowed students to apply their knowledge of this unit, reflect on how their actions impact the environment, and boosted their self-esteem because they realized they had made a difference in the world. [Best practices]:

- This project helped preserve, protect, and enhance the environment.
- This project met many objectives for the unit. The students learned about how the absence of trees affects runoff and the necessity to guard the streams with vegetation to slow the process. Besides the impact to the bay's watershed, students also learned how planting trees improves the bay's chances of maintaining its natural chemistry and living creatures.
- The culmination was the reflection on the day's activities. The reflection process began during the unit with class discussions as content was being presented. By the time students wrote their reflections, they had internalized what they did.
- The students' responsibilities for this project were to plant trees and learn about the plantation's historical significance. As a highlight of the day, students visited the conservation property's 120 year old Oak Tree, which is one of the many attractions the conservation offers.
- The community partnership with the conservation property allows this project to take place. They were extremely supportive by planning the day's events with us, visiting the students to explain their responsibilities, and they taught the students how to plant trees.
- During the Environment Unit, students learned the impact of runoff and natural disasters on the Chesapeake Bay and the importance of stream buffers.
- On the day of the trip, students watched " The Giving Tree" and discussed its meaning. They also read the poem, "The Tree" as a cross-curricular connection.