

# EDUCATIONAL IMPACT REPORT

## 2025–2026 SCHOOL YEAR

The school-age child is the largest, most important segment of the community we serve. Through our Educational Enrichment Programs (EEPs), we provide high-quality, engaging experiences for students preK through high school.

The Mariners' Museum and Park®



*Cover: PreK students participating in Math at the Museum.*

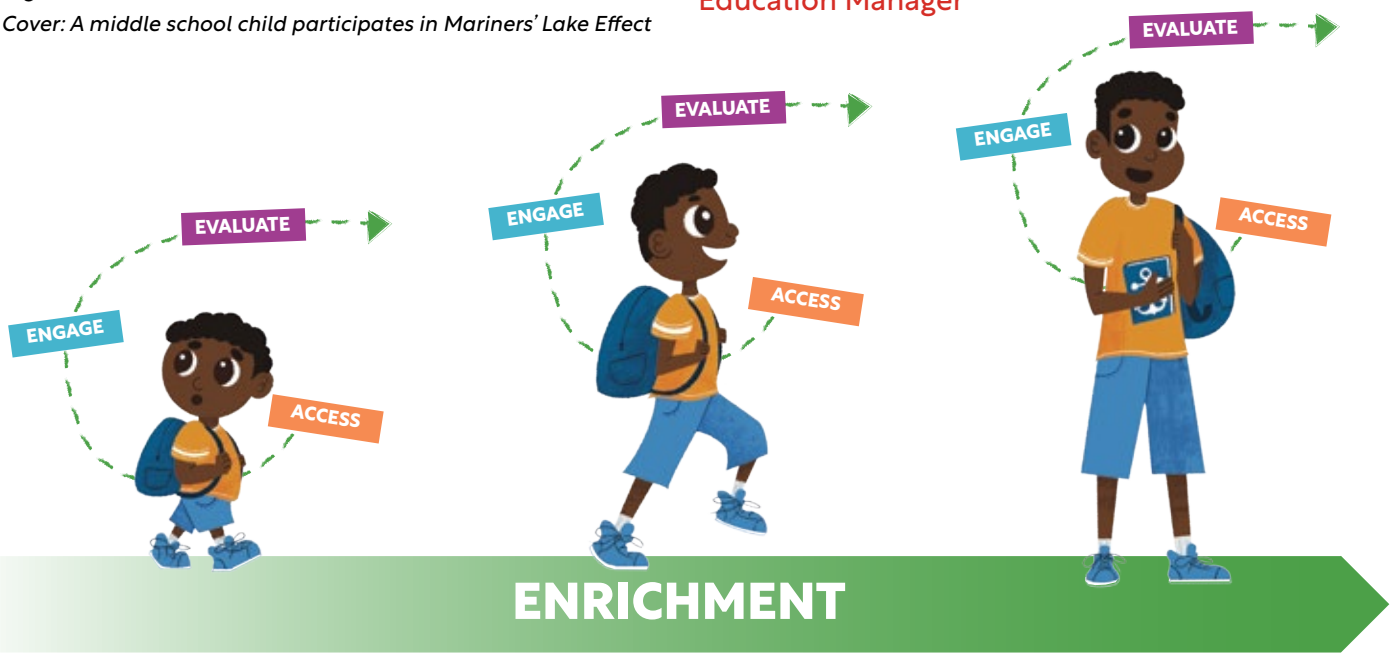
*Above: Young learners participate in a program in the Bumblebee Learning Garden.*

*Back Cover: A middle school child participates in Mariners' Lake Effect*

At The Mariners' Museum and Park (The Mariners'), our Education Team is committed to continually innovating and enhancing our Educational Enrichment Programs (EEPs). The 2025–2026 school year marked a period of amazing progress towards this goal. The team achieved a record number of student engagements, strengthened partnerships with school divisions, and continued to serve as a valued resource for our community. We expanded access to our programming and updated EEPs with a dynamic combination of gamification, experiential learning, and career exploration. These efforts reflect our commitment to investing in the next generation, unlocking their potential, and encouraging a sense of belonging.

You may remember me as the Early Childhood Program Manager, singing The Itsy Bitsy Spider in the Bumblebee Learning Garden. This year, I stepped into a new role as Education Manager, where I'll continue to support the growth of our early childhood programs while expanding my focus to provide value to external partners and lead new initiatives. As you explore this report, I am confident that our team's passion and expertise will shine through. I'm so proud of the work we're doing, and I know you will be too.

**Amanda Abrill**
Education Manager




## MARINERS' EDUCATIONAL ENRICHMENT MODEL

True impact results from engaging students multiple times over their school careers



*PreK students participating in Math at the Museum.*

## SOUTHSIDE ENGAGEMENTS

| 2024–25 | 2025–26 |
|---|---|
| 5,893 | 8,794 |

## EARLY CHILDHOOD ENGAGEMENTS*

| 2024–25 | 2025–26 |
|---|---|
| 1,101 | 1,414 |

**The Early Childhood school year reporting period was updated to span July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026.*



# ACCESS

## Lowering financial and logistical barriers

At The Mariners', we are committed to expanding access to students throughout the region. This year, we significantly broadened our impact by increasing student engagement across the Southside, including Norfolk, Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, and Suffolk.

We also strengthened our connection to our local community by expanding our early childhood programming, serving more early learning centers and engaging more young children than in previous years. These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to making high-quality educational experiences accessible to learners of all ages.

**Anna Lynn Thornsberry**
Senior History Educator

# ENGAGE

## Experiences that enhance curriculum

Now in its fifth year, the Lake Stewards program connects students to Mariners' Lake through a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE). During the program, students plant native grasses along the shoreline, collect water quality data, and participate in an interactive fishing station that reinforces key watershed concepts.

To further strengthen student engagement, educators incorporated gamification into the Lake Stewards Fishing Station. Gamification is the process of adding game-like aspects, such as points or levels, to an educational activity to promote active involvement. This new iteration of Lake Stewards is a perfect example of how our team continues to innovate our programming in response to the ever-changing educational landscape. **Check out the QR Code in this edition to hear more about this effort.**

Haleigh Bird
Senior Science Educator



*Students taking water quality data from Mariners' Lake*



*Above: High Schoolers planting eelgrass in Mariners' Lake.*

*Right: Children listening to a story read in the Bumblebee Learning Garden*



Our new accessible boat invites more students to engage directly with maritime history and exploration, helping ensure every learner can participate in meaningful, hands-on experiences.



## ENRICHMENT PROGRESS

Engagements by school district and grade level

**2025–26 Academic Year**




*A key part of our enrichment strategy is providing EEPs for entire grade levels across local school districts. This chart shows our progress.*

Building on the success of Wonder Wednesdays, we expanded our public programming with the addition of Winter Wednesdays, providing families with engaging learning experiences year-round. Both programs are offered in English and Spanish, creating more opportunities for children and caregivers to learn, play, and explore together.



# ENRICH

## Developing lasting connections

At The Mariners', the school-age child represents the largest and most important segment of the community we serve. Through our EEPs, the Education Team is committed to providing meaningful learning experiences that enhance classroom instruction and encourage exploration. This year, we expanded, placing a greater emphasis on career exploration—a lifelong process that begins before they walk through our doors. Given our unique collections and enrichment model, The Mariners' is uniquely positioned to help every student envision new possibilities for their future.

**Claudia Moncada-Wireman**
Senior Science Educator

# EVALUATE

## Assessing impact

This year, we measured impact by the external partnerships that connected us with schools, community organizations, businesses, and cultural institutions, demonstrating the value of our dedication to students. Through collaborations with partners like York County School Division, we created meaningful learning opportunities, broadened access to our programs, and strengthened our role as a trusted community resource. **Look for the QR code in this edition to hear from one of our partners.**

**Amanda Abrill**
Education Manager



*3rd graders on a maritime adventure in the Exploration: Mediterranean Gallery.*



*Middle school students act as Maritime Archaeologists in our "Shipwrecks" program.*



**24**
**COMMUNITY EVENTS ATTENDED**



*Team members attending the York County STEM Challenge*

This year, the Education team participated in more community events than ever before. By bringing hands-on activities and engaging educational experiences beyond the walls of The Mariners', we connected with thousands of children and families, expanded awareness of our programs, and inspired new audiences to explore all that we have to offer.

# SUSTAINING IMPACT

## 2025–2026 HIGHLIGHTS

**30,893**
Student Engagements

**89%** Number of students served in and around Hampton Roads

**77%** recieved a free program

**81%** Served through in-person programming*

**49%** recieved free transportation

*On campus or in the classroom

**13,764**
**Lower Peninsula Students**
Newport News and Hampton

**8,794**
**Southside Students**
Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, and Suffolk

**6,785**
**Other VA School Districts**
Yorktown, Williamsburg, Gloucester, and more

| | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 |
|---|---|---|---|
| TOTAL ENGAGEMENTS | 26,437 | 29,377 | **30,893** |
| % of students - free programs | 80% | 75% | **77%** |
| Virtual | 5,788 | 4,782 | **5,847** |
| In the classroom | 8,462 | 8,640 | **9,197** |
| At The Mariners' | 12,187 | 15,955 | **15,849** |
| % of students - free transportation* | 51% | 51% | **49%** |

*This percentage is based on the total number of students who participated in a program at The Museum or in the Park.

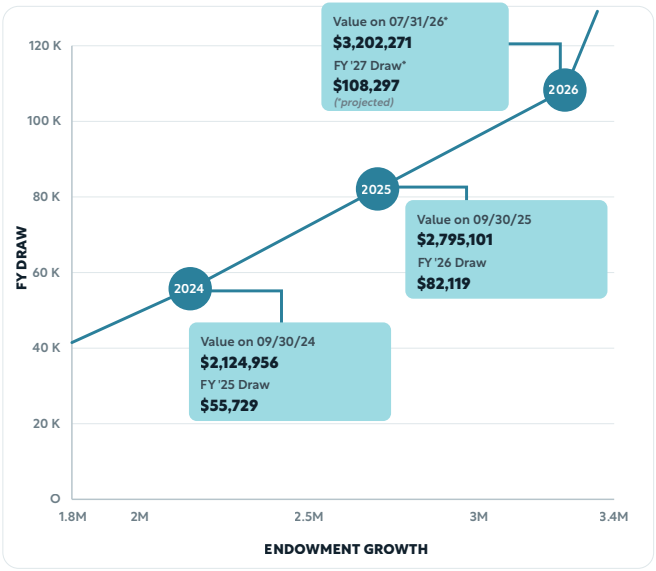


Scan the QR Code to hear from our educators and partners as they reflect on the moments, milestones, and accomplishments that made this year so special.

## Resourcing educational enrichment

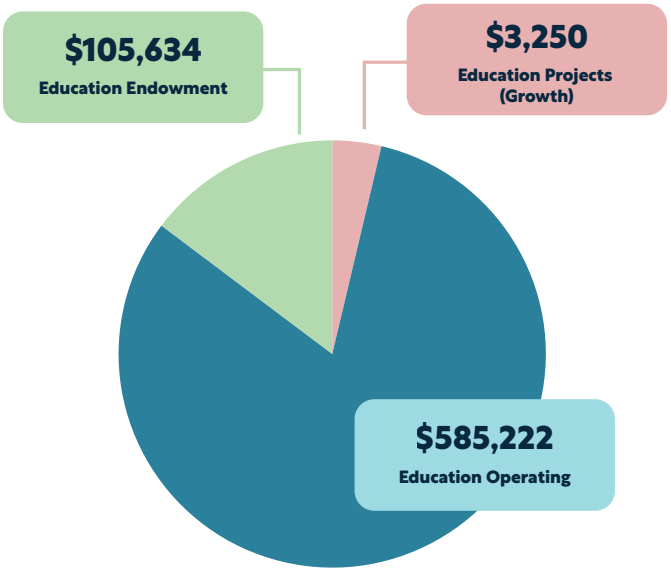
Sustaining the Education Department means creating lasting opportunities for discovery, learning, and exploration. Together, we can ensure educational experiences continue to inspire learners of all ages for years to come.

## ENDOWMENT FUNDS




## FUNDING RAISED

2025–2026 SCHOOL YEAR





# THANK YOU

to our Partners for making this school year a success

## THE MARINERS' EDUCATION ENDOWMENT

**The Marvin V. "Bill" Craft, Jr. Fund**

**The Angie Newman Johnson, Marjorie Smith Charles, Oscar Frommel Smith Fund**

## INDIVIDUAL ENDOWMENTS FOR PUBLIC ACCESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

*These endowments provide the local, national, and global communities we serve with broad and meaningful access to and engagement with our Cultural Heritage and Living Collections.*

### EDUCATION ENDOWMENTS

**The E. Robert and Gabrielle C. Denmead Fund**

**The Rona Mound and Erwin B. Drucker Fund**

**The Kenneth A. and Patricia A. Hall Fund**

**The Henry and Sally Holzbach Fund**

**The Jennifer J. Celesia and B. Ashton Hudgins Fund**

**The Laura and Jerrold Miller Fund**

**The Petters Family Fund**

**The Randolph D. Rouse Chair**

**The Scull Family Fund**

### ENRICHMENT PARTNERS

**Christopher Newport University, Peake Childhood Center, Coastal Virginia STEM Ecosystem, Newport News Master Gardeners, Old Dominion University, Monitor National Marine Sanctuary , Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Newport News Public Library, Virginia Master Naturalists - Peninsula Chapter**

### HAMPTON ROADS SCHOOL DISTRICT PARTNERS

**Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and York County**

For a full list of donors, visit: www.MarinersMuseum.org/give-and-join/world-of-champions/