

2021 FieldSTEM Celebration Honors PEI Educators, Partners and Advocates

Across Washington State, teachers, administrators, and community partners are bringing FieldSTEM to life in classrooms, schools and outdoor spaces. On November 10th PEI celebrated those efforts at a virtual FieldSTEM Celebration which also honored legislators who have been strong advocates of our work. The online ceremony featured awards in six categories, with highlights and videos from each winner.

Teacher of the Year: Katie Standlea, [Komachin Middle School](#), [North Thurston Public Schools](#), Lacey. Standlea teaches 8th-grade science and was part of the writing team that developed a Climate Science Solutions Oriented Learning Storyline (SOLS) for urban forestry. During the pandemic, she implemented that storyline with her students virtually, creating connections to indigenous communities and introducing her students to a wildland firefighter. “FieldSTEM provides all students with these opportunities,” she says. “By bringing them in-person to sites in their local community, we are able to connect them to real issues and brainstorm possible solutions so they can be informed citizens.”

School of the Year: [On Track Academy](#), [Spokane Public Schools](#), Spokane. PEI worked with On Track Academy staff to help students create a plan focused on urban forestry and environmental justice. Students attended a neighborhood council meeting and met with a professional arborist from the City of Spokane to identify areas lacking in tree canopy, where they eventually planted 24 trees. On Track Academy became one of nine Arbor Day Foundation K-12 Tree Campuses in the United States and next year the project will continue with middle school and elementary school students. “This was a perfect avenue for us to develop agency,” says Principal Lisa Mattson. “It created a strong sense of connection and community, especially during a pandemic. When you combine that level of power and the capacity to create solutions that are not just about [themselves], our students can’t wait to do more.”

District of the Year: [Thorp School District](#), Thorp. The district is in the process of transforming a large empty field into a thriving garden with a nursery, a pergola outdoor education classroom, a nature trail and a pollinator farm. The garden will grow food for the

district's cafeterias while also teaching students about agriculture and science through FFA and CTE courses. Central Washington FieldSTEM Coordinator Megan Rivard applauds the district's vision, perseverance, collaborative spirit and ingenuity. "The most important thing is that this is not a school project, it's a community project," says Superintendent Terry Bergeson. "The garden nursery will be open for people to walk through and look at. It's a community asset."

Community Collaborator of the Year: [Rayonier](#). To introduce Rayonier's career-connected learning program, PEI Coastal FieldSTEM Coordinator Julie Tennis read off the names of 12 participating Rayonier employees and three other contributing agencies. The project has grown from a one-time field trip offering for a small group of students to a multi-year event with 27 students from four different school districts. Everyone who participates is enthusiastic, from students to staff. "FieldSTEM is a natural fit for Rayonier as it touches many of the career fields [we employ]," says Engineering Manager Mark Smalley. "Our contractors and state regulators that we work with enjoy sharing their passion for the work we do in the forest. After the last spring field trip in May, all the presenters wanted to know when they would get a chance to do it again."

Legislator of the Year: [Representative Sharon Shewmake](#), 42nd Legislative District.

Representative Shewmake led the House effort to bring bipartisan support for increasing the FieldSTEM proviso in the state legislature by \$250,000 a year and connected PEI with other legislators interested in workforce development and addressing barriers for underserved students. Shewmake's two young children were on the call, and they came down strongly on the side of outdoor versus indoor learning. "When I deal with my own kids, outdoor opportunities bring science alive," she says.

Legislator of the Year: [Senator Judy Warnick](#), 13th Legislative District. Senator Warnick

was one of the driving forces behind developing satellite skill centers for rural regions and a staunch advocate of increasing the FieldSTEM proviso in the Senate. Having grown up on a farm, Warnick knows firsthand the value of outdoor education and celebrates PEI's role in bringing opportunities to underserved students. She also recognizes the importance of PEI's Spanish language initiatives. "I represent an area that has a high number of Hispanics, some of

whom have moved here from other countries,” she says. “It’s very difficult for a lot of those students to understand English. The work done by PEI is allowing those students to not only have the classroom work but to be outside and be involved in the outdoor world of our state.”

Director of the Year: [Ellen Ebert](#), Director of Secondary Education, Content and Science at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Dr. Ebert has been involved with FieldSTEM since its inception. PEI’s Executive Director Kathryn Kurtz credits her for helping to make the educational system in Washington State one of the strongest in the nation, and for positively impacting students from marginalized and low-income communities. “Ellen’s leadership has made it possible for FieldSTEM to meet the needs of educators and students across the state,” says Kurtz. Dr. Ebert believes in outdoor-based learning as an essential component of education. “It’s so important for every student to have that experience,” she says. “We need to raise our youth to have a deeper understanding and connection with the world around them. They are our citizens and voters of the future.”

Due to the pandemic, the 2020 celebration was canceled, so those award winners were also recognized at this year’s event.

2020 Teacher of the Year Jon Hunter, [Forks High School](#), Quilayute Valley School District

2020 School of the Year: [Valley School](#), Valley School District

2020 District of the Year: [Puyallup School District](#), Puyallup

2020 Community Collaborator of the Year: [Capitol Land Trust](#)

2020 Legislator of the Year: [Representative Jesse Johnson](#), Legislative District 30

2020 Legislator of the Year: [Representative Mike Steele](#), 12th Legislative District

Congratulations to all the awardees!