

Darrington School District

Environmental Literacy Funding Helps Darrington District Get Students Outside Year-Round

According to an often-quoted Norwegian saying, 'There is no such thing as bad weather, only insufficient clothing.' As of spring 2022, students in the Darrington School District are much better prepared to meet what the elements throw at them thanks to funding through an Environmental Literacy grant. "We get 80 inches of rain per year on average, significantly more than the lower Puget Sound region," says Darrington teacher Gavin Gladsjo. "That has been a limiting factor for us in getting out and utilizing the awesome resource that we have."

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY



ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROJECT

Until now, the district had been borrowing clothing and equipment from Glacier Peak Institute

Gladsjo notes that the Darrington district has the highest percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunches in the county, which means many students can't afford quality outdoor gear - or any gear, for that matter. "The rain gear, boots and gloves are going to allow us to access the outdoors year-round, not just in the fall and spring," he says.

When the district applied for funding this spring, the proposal included three components:

- redeveloping trails near the district and creating a small challenge course
- purchasing outdoor gear so all students can get outside year-round regardless of their income level or the weather
- mentorship through collaboration with PEI and the Duwamish Longhouse Museum to develop a vegetable and native plant garden with signs in both English and Salish.

Plans for the challenge course are currently on hold due to unforeseen additional costs.

However, without funds, the district would have been relying on grants and other fundraising strategies and all three projects would have been significantly delayed, Gladsjo maintains. "There aren't a whole lot of options within the community to overcome those fiscal hurdles. We're always going to be looking for ways that we can better serve these kids, so if this opportunity is available again in the future, I foresee us applying."