

## Pullman Public Schools

*School Gardens Grow in Pullman Public Schools With Environmental Literacy Funding*

Pullman is one of the ten sunniest cities in Washington State, which makes it a wonderful place for growing crops but the sun can also create challenges. At Lincoln Middle School in Pullman Public Schools (PPS), heat and reflected glare from sunlight have made it nearly impossible for students to use the school garden space. "The heat is one factor but even when it's chilly outside, the brightness of the sun reflects off of white papers so the students are squinting and they can't see," explains Life Sciences teacher Marla Haugen.

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY



# ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROJECT

The school is using Environmental Literacy funding for pergolas to cover the area, which includes eight raised garden beds and four new picnic tables. Conveniently located next to the library and science and art classrooms, the area is also near a short nature trail and gets a fair amount of foot traffic. Haugen hopes the pergolas will make the garden a gathering point for students and their families, not just during the school year but in the summer months as well. In the future, she plans to seek funding for signage to explain various aspects of the garden such as the composting site.

Without Environmental Literacy funds, the expense of high-quality coverings would have been prohibitive. Haugen explored canvas options early on. "They don't last as long and there would have been a lot of logistical problems," she says. "Once they faded, I don't know if we would have been able to replace them. These are going to last much longer."

Gardens are also a priority at PPS's Franklin Elementary School, which is using Environmental Literacy funds to purchase tools and use the school greenhouse as a focal point for lessons on soil health, sustainable water management and methods of growing next-generation crops.

"We have a greenhouse, but it doesn't have the right equipment and it's not accessible for students on a year-round basis," says Principal Stephanie Bray. "We want them to use the greenhouse to its full potential and run experiments." Before the pandemic, former Franklin teacher Nancy Nelson coordinated efforts between students and local agencies on an ecological restoration project that used native plants to control erosion on a hill near the greenhouse. With the proper tools, more such projects become possible.

The greenhouse will also function as a learning lab for food production, according to Bray. "We've planted vegetables that can be served at lunch or as a classroom snack to help the students see the importance of sustainability, the growing process and where a lot of our food comes from."

Part of the funds also provides compensation for school personnel to assemble the greenhouse equipment and begin putting it to immediate use. "If I hadn't been able to use some of the funds for staff, it would have been me and my custodian trying to put everything together over the summer," Bray says. "It's the end of the school year, but students have already planted some seedlings in class and now they're able to transfer them to the greenhouse, which is exciting."