

Concrete School District

New Gear + Professional Training Help Concrete Teachers Get Students Outdoors

Located next to the Skagit River and 30 minutes from North Cascades National Park, the Concrete School District is surrounded by natural wonders, including old-growth forests and mountain glaciers. The campus even includes a forest and an overgrown native plant trail, but most of the district's 505 students cannot afford the clothing and equipment that would allow them to explore these resources.

That's where Environmental Literacy funding comes in. The district will use its Environmental Literacy grant to provide tools and outdoor gear, professional development for teachers and supplies to support the integration of the school forest

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY



ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROJECT

and Farm to School program. Students will use the equipment to remove blackberries from the native plant trail and open the space for all classes. Concrete teachers, meanwhile, will attend a Pacific Education Institute workshop and three training sessions with Glacier Peak Institute to develop outdoor education strategies for the 2022-23 school year.

The ecological restoration project will also allow students to earn volunteer hours by planning the trail system and removing invasive species. Concrete High School science teacher Sacha Buller has been building a set of lessons that integrate the school forest with STEM and other subjects.

“This grant will allow us to create a forest ecology curriculum that has students using tools like increment borers, soil corers, compasses, and rangefinders that foresters and field biologists use on the job,” says Buller. “Students will use the equipment to set up forest plots that they will track to understand the complex ecosystems and observe their changes throughout the year.”

Previously local nonprofit Glacier Peak Institute provided those tools and supplies, which limited their availability. Housing those resources on campus will be a game-changer, according to Buller. “Having the tools here at school will increase our ability to have student-led inquiry because I’ll have them available at all times for students when they want to observe their forest plots.”

The native plant trail will also include trail signs for identification of plants in both English and Lushootseed and Environmental Literacy funds will provide a new roof for a shed used to store outdoor gear.