

Riverview School District

Field Kits Empower Outdoor Learning in Riverview School District

For many teachers, the idea of taking students outdoors for lessons can be daunting, particularly if they lack resources and training. Riverview School District (RSD) is addressing both challenges, first through professional development and ongoing support for teachers from Pacific Education Institute (PEI) and next by providing each K-5 classroom with FieldSTEM kits, tools that help educators integrate PEI's outdoor-based FieldSTEM model with their students.

Environmental Literacy funding will cover the cost of the FieldSTEM kits, along with field guides, anchor texts (central texts around which a lesson or unit is built, such as a

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY



ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROJECT

narrative, image or data set), and access to outdoor learning aids. The permanent classroom Field Kits will include clipboards, Rite in the Rain paper, measuring tape, and magnifying glasses for every student. These kits will allow teachers a degree of flexibility in their instruction and create greater access to outdoor learning.

“This Environmental Literacy funding is critical to providing science education using our outdoor environment because without it, teachers wouldn’t have what they need to feel confident in doing this work successfully,” says Kristin Edlund, Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning at RSD. “Having these supplies results in teachers feeling both excited about and capable of taking kids outside for authentic science work in the outdoor environment. Without them, teachers saw barriers instead of opportunities.”

The district has taken a systemic and sustainable approach to outdoor-based STEM. In partnership with PEI, RSD’s teaching staff has modified life science lessons at each grade level K-5 to incorporate the FieldSTEM model. Environmental Literacy funding has helped to make that work cohesive, according to Edlund.

“Without this funding, our next steps would be to work with individual teachers,” she explains. “We would then attempt to scale up successes with other classes and this would take years before all students had opportunities to learn and practice the skills of Next Generation Science Standards. With this funding, all students will immediately utilize the outdoor environment to build the science, math and literacy skills reflected in the standard.”