

## Yakima School District

### *Environmental Literacy Funds Equip Eisenhower High School Students for Restoration Ecology Internships*

By spring 2022, Eisenhower High School staff and their community partners had spent months of time and energy planning for a six-week restoration ecology internship program for high school students during the summer. Regional stakeholders had already committed funding and plans were in place for networking opportunities with Mid-Columbia Fisheries, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Bureau of Reclamation, the Yakama Nation and Washington State Fish & Wildlife Department. Nearly every aspect of the program was ready to go.

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY



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# ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROJECT

There was one thing they hadn't considered, however: gear.

"We hadn't even thought of it," says Eisenhower Career and Technical Education teacher Robin Driver. "We'd been struggling to find funding for our students for the summer program, but when the Environmental Literacy funding became available we knew we couldn't spend it on stipends because of the timeline. We brainstormed a list with our partners at Mid-Columbia Fisheries and Yakima Basin Environmental Education Center of things that the kids would need."

Eisenhower is in the Yakima School District, where 83.9% of students qualify for free and reduced lunches. Students frequently show up to school in flip-flops, shorts and tank tops and most would not be able to afford the clothing necessary for fieldwork. "We wanted to make sure that our students would all have access to appropriate and safe clothing and equipment to be in the field," Driver explains. "We didn't want them to have any type of hardship involved with participating in this program."

During the six-week internship through the Pacific Education Institute, participants will gain skills in safe work practices, how to use different tools like GPS, and essential workplace proficiencies like communication, problem-solving, collaboration, and creative and critical thinking. They can also gain certifications in CPR, Boater Safety and Public Operations. When they return to school in the fall, the high school students will create presentations and hands-on activities to share what they've learned with Yakima School District elementary school students.

Without Environmental Literacy funding, the school would have been scrambling to collect gear, says Driver. "This is a perfect fit. We have spent all year planning and we're so excited to get this program going with our students."