

## Outdoor School For All Training

Fall 2023

by Amy Keiper, NW FieldSTEM Coordinator

Where might you find a school administrator balancing on one leg, laughing as she asks a teacher in mid-somersault if she would join her for afternoon tea with the Queen? How about a great, hairy Sasquatch singing songs around a campfire? You'll find them at the seasonal Outdoor School For All Training.

To break the ice at the three-day fall training in Ocean Park, October 23-27th, Cispus Learning Center facilitators led more than fifty nonformal and formal educators and school administrators interested in developing their 5th and 6th-grade outdoor school program in fun, active community-building games. These games, along with weekly "cabin meetings" and family-style meals, fostered trust and open communication between staff from both sites and schools that resulted in stronger professional connections all week.



*Cabin groups made living sculptures to show the nature names they chose during Training week. "I liked how our cabin group leader had us working together" -Jackie Gliddon, Tonasket School District.*

The professional learning was designed to model the type of education expected at outdoor school programs as described by the newly published Characteristics of a High-Quality Outdoor School (CHQOS). The CHQOS was developed by Outdoor Schools Washington (OSW) in partnership with PEI and other community leaders and is a growth tool comprised of a rubric, self-assessment tool, and growth plan to support outdoor schools programs to offer a more experiential, inquiry-based, standards-aligned, integrated, place-based, certifiably safe program for all 5th and 6th graders in WA state.



*Participants reflect on what they know, notice, and wonder during the FieldSTEM hike. "I learned so much on the hike; this whole training was one of the best professional learning experiences I've been to," said Jason Rounds, 6th grade teacher at Conway Middle School.*

Participants spent a lot of time outdoors each day and the various mapping activities were a favorite. PEI facilitators led participants through sound, math, and cultural mapping to develop multidisciplinary academic skills, including cultural competency and social and emotional learning. "I learned to slow down and take time to listen. I also learned that sharing about my culture is very validating," said 6th grade teacher Tammy Cresap, from Ridgefield school district.

"The idea of incorporating more math in outdoor school was interesting. It makes me wonder if we should incorporate more of that," shared another educator.

During the week, participants experienced a three-hour FieldSTEM hike, got their hands sandy with a microplastics Field Investigation, experienced ELA in outdoor learning, water sustainability education, and native ways of knowing and tribal sovereignty education, and learned how to build programming with local community partners and experts such as Coastal Raptors and TwinHarbor Waterkeeper.

They also learned how to access funding sources, how to build NGSS-aligned lessons, and finally applied their learning during planning time.

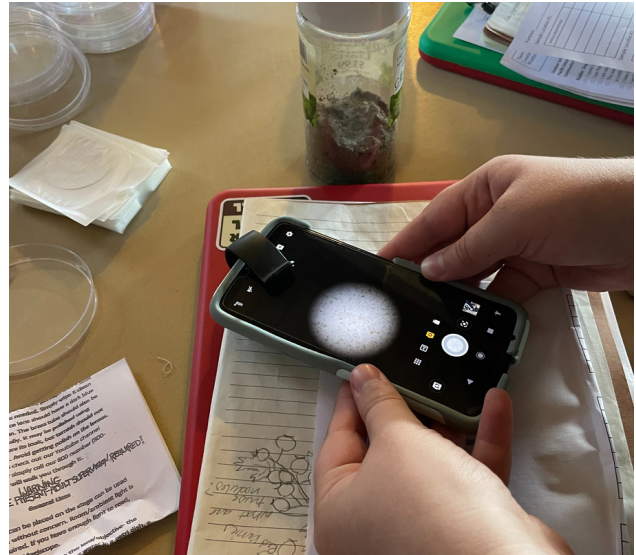


*Participants use math and science to field investigations to determine if habitat supports two local species of concern. "I learned how exciting STEM activities can be." -Tye Hunter, teacher at Hazel Dell Elementary*



Staff from OSW, PEI, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and Garden Raised Bounty (GRuB) facilitated each session.

The next Outdoor School For All Training will be offered April 23-27th in Cle Elum. Indicate your interest or feel free to ask questions by emailing Cortney Suderman at [csuderman@outdoorschoolswa.org](mailto:csuderman@outdoorschoolswa.org) and Amy Keiper at [akeiper@pacificeducationinstitute.org](mailto:akeiper@pacificeducationinstitute.org).



*Participants collect evidence and analyze data to make a claim about the presence of microplastics during a field investigation. The Field Investigation was awesome! I learned a lot. Can't thank you enough for providing organizations and people I can seek out for information.*

*-Phoenix Smallcanyon, North Cascades Institute*