PEI PACIFIC EDUCATION INSTITUTE

2025 – 2026

Annual Report

Vision: Community-based outdoor learning in every school as a catalyst for sustainability and justice.



LETTER

A Message from Our Leadership

For PEI, the 25-26 school year was a time of reflection and a refocus on the value this organization brings to the state. An active Board of Directors and staff involvement in decision making fosters trust and builds collective competence so PEI's leadership is continuously improving processes and materials to create an inclusive and welcoming culture for our internal and external work.

PEI is a catalyst for systemic educational change supporting improved outcomes for students and communities through the FieldSTEM model. FieldSTEM empowers equitable, inclusive learning advancing culturally responsive and evidence-based instructional practices. The benefit can be seen across the state as we work to build teacher comfort and confidence to get young people outdoors connecting to nature and their communities, systemic school and district implementation of place-based programming, and intentional pathways to the careers that contribute to a sustainable and just world.

PEI continues to be a trusted leader, representing balanced, evidence-based expertise for policymakers in education and workforce. PEI was appointed the Agriculture and Natural Resource Sector Lead for Career Connect Washington and continues to be a bridge between the education, workforce development, natural resource and environmental service sectors building a diverse, skillful and environmentally literate workforce.

The Youth Engaged in Sustainable Systems (YESS) programs are examples of how PEI leverages partnerships to strengthen and scale high-quality program implementation while equipping educators with relevant, standards-aligned resources, professional development and consultation to prepare students for a sustainable future. We are measuring, collecting evidence, and reporting the collective impact of the work that schools and community partners are implementing under this program model.

PEI remains a strategic investment for impact-driven funders. In spring 2026, we received funding from The Russell Family Foundation to begin the work of identifying the desired outcomes of the Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE) and Outdoor Learning (OL) field to more effectively tell our collective impact story. As we move into the 26-27 school year, we will continue this work. This is just one example of how PEI is well positioned to leverage partnerships to fulfill our vision of community-based learning in every school as a catalyst for sustainability and justice come to life.

PEI is also well positioned to continue our work strengthening outcomes for youth and inspiring the next generation of leaders by providing educators with skills, confidence and resources to support hands-on outdoor learning. Reach out to us for opportunities to be a partner in this quest.



Kathryn Kurtz

KATHRYN KURTZ
Executive Director



Leslie Druffel

LESLIE DRUFFEL
Board President

2025–26 BY THE NUMBERS

Our Reach



25,000+
STUDENTS IMPACTED

413
EDUCATORS ENGAGED

29
WORKSHOPS DELIVERED

Professional learning focusing on building educator capacity to get students outdoors.

33
COUNTIES REACHED

Our programs reached counties across the state with locally-relevant learning opportunities.

107
PARTICIPATING DISTRICTS

Districts large and small value our programs.

144
COMMUNITY PARTNERS

PEI values locally relevant, career-connected learning and so engaging community is essential to the FieldSTEM Model.

2,000+
CLOCK HOURS

PEI is an OSPI-approved provider for Washington State Clock Hours for formal K-12 educators.

OUR MISSION

To strengthen outcomes for youth and inspire the next generation of leaders by providing educators with skills, confidence and resources to support hands-on outdoor learning.



(Re)introducing PEI's Core Programs

PEI's work is multi-faceted and interconnected, bridging education, environment, industry and community. In 2026, our team considered every aspect of our programming and boiled it down to **three key areas** based on outcomes, audience and indicators of success. While overlap exists, each program is distinct.



01

TEACHER CONFIDENCE



02

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT IMPLEMENTATION



03

CAREER AND WORKFORCE PATHWAYS



PROGRAM 01

Teacher Confidence and Efficacy

Fewer than 30% of teachers in the United States take their students outdoors even once a month. Lack of confidence is one of the biggest barriers.

— OUTDOOR LEARNING DAY STUDY

WHAT WE DO

Building teacher comfort and confidence has always been central to PEI's FieldSTEM model. At our workshops, educators get to practice new skills, explore resources and learn from colleagues who've been where they are. They leave with strategies and newfound courage to take that first step toward getting students outdoors.

> "
>
> *I used to think that taking kids outside would be chaos. Now I think I can make expectations clear and my students will be more engaged than they are in a classroom.*
>
> WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT



PROGRAM 02

Systemic School and District Implementation

Place-based outdoor learning has been shown to foster a sense of belonging, increase student learning, increase academic persistence and narrow equity gaps.

— UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA LINCOLN STUDY

WHAT WE DO

PEI's Systemic School and District Implementation program is a systemic approach that includes all teaching staff and students. Our team co-designs customized implementation strategies, consults with educators at regular intervals and connects districts with local community partners. This ensures equal access for all students to quality outdoor-based education.

> *"We don't need any more studies. This is something we know is good for kids. For the psychological health of students, getting outside costs pennies on the dollar.*
>
> **ANDREW PERKINS**
> Superintendent, Thorp School District



PROGRAM 03

Career and Workforce Pathways

Students who earn more than one credit in CTE are up to 12% more likely to graduate from high school.

— EDUCATION RESEARCH & DATA CENTER STUDY ON CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN WASHINGTON STATE

WHAT WE DO

PEI's Career and Workforce Pathways program fills a need for a skilled and experienced workforce in the natural resources sector by providing students with opportunities for career-connected learning. Through CTE courses and the Youth Engaged in Sustainable Systems (YESS) program, students gain academic credits, real-world experience and Industry Recognized Credentials (IRCs) as they prepare for their futures.

132 STUDENTS COMPLETED THE YESS PROGRAM

12,853 WORKSITE HOURS COMPLETED

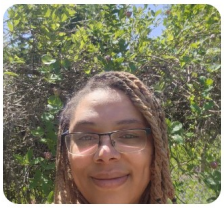
"

We have a lot of kids who are not super motivated by sitting at a desk all day and not feeling the relevance of what they're learning. They come back from the YESS program with a new motivation for graduation and being able to see the relevance of the skills they're learning for a future beyond school.

KRISTIN EDLUND
Assistant Director of Teaching & Learning, Riverview School District

STAFF & BOARD

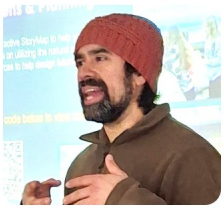
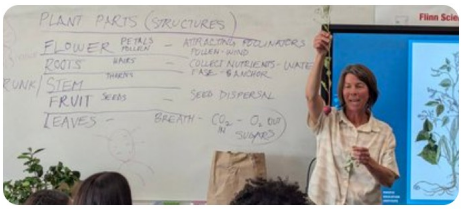
Our People










LEADERSHIP

Kathryn Kurtz
Executive Director

Gail Kramer
Finance & HR Director

Megan Rivard
Associate Director

Heidi Smith
Associate Director of Communications & Development

Heather Spalding
Associate Director of Green Jobs

COORDINATORS

Amy Dawley
Eastern WA FieldSTEM

Daniel Cuevas
GIS Program Specialist

Emily Newman
Lower Columbia FieldSTEM

Rachel Drummond
Program Coordinator

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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President

Steve Robinson
Vice President

Erin Ewald
Treasurer

Claudine Reynolds
Secretary

MEMBERS

Cinnamon Bear
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Justin Parker
Clare Sobetski
Jason Callahan
Tim Garchow
Cindy Mitchell
Scott Seaman



WELCOME

David Hartness, Executive Director

After an extensive search and hiring process, PEI welcomed David Hartness as our new Executive Director in September 2026. We are excited to move into the future under David's leadership.

WITH GRATITUDE

Our Funders

$100,000+

Employment Security Department
WASHINGTON STATE

$20,000 – $99,999

The Russell Family Foundation

National Forest Foundation

Olympia

City of Tumwater

KeyBank

Manulife

Dawkins Charitable Trust

$10,000 – $19,999

Grays Harbor Community Foundation

Sustainable Forestry Initiative Washington
SFI-01148

$5,000 – $9,999

Green Diamond

Hampton Lumber

Community Foundation of South Puget Sound

Nisqually Indian Tribe

OURCU
Our Community Credit Union

Port Blakely

Rayonier

Sierra Pacific Industries

Washington Friends of Farms & Forests

WITH GRATITUDE

Our Funders, continued

$1,000 – $4,999

American Fisheries Society
Bloedel Timberlands
Florence B. Kilworth Foundation
ImpactAssets
Julie Anderson
Manulife Forest Investments
Smurfit Westrock
Squaxin Island Tribe
Suquamish Tribe
Taylor Shellfish
The McGregor Company
Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund

$1 – $999

Eric Barkman
Laura Barnoski
Christopher Basham
Kathrine (Debbie) Cade
Jacquelin Earley
Martin & Susan Fortin
Fred Meyer Rewards
Julie Fry
Kim Gaffi
Doug Hooks
John Ison
Jessica Josephs
Joseph Kemmer
Paul & Gail Kramer
Kathryn Kurtz
Krista Larsen
Chuck Lennox
Jean MacGregor
Roberta McFarland
Cindy Mitchell
Edward & Patricia O'Brien
Lisa Perry
Claudine Reynolds
Tom Shorey
Heidi Smith
Dennis Sterner
Kathleen Stidham
Catherine Taylor
William Taylor
Michi Thacker
William Turner
Adriana Vazquez Jaco
Steve Wang & Kathryn Hamilton
Gareth Waugh
Anonymous (Household)





FISCAL YEAR 2026

Our Finances

72% of every dollar spent in FY26 went directly to **programs** for educators and students.

REVENUE

	AMOUNT	SHARE
Government Grants	$222,898	30%
Earned Income	$216,232	29%
Foundations & Nonprofit Giving	$178,255	24%
Corporate Giving	$81,200	11%
Other	$30,685	4%
Individual & Community Giving	$11,505	2%
Total Revenue	**$740,905**	

EXPENSES



	AMOUNT
Programs	$828,113
General & Administration	$230,646
Fundraising	$89,124
Total Expenses	**$1,147,883**

GET INVOLVED

An Invitation



Support

When you give to PEI, you directly support educators in building scientifically literate communities. Consider:

- Making an individual donation
- A recurring donation
- Sponsorship
- Planned Gift / DAF / IRA

To learn more, contact
devo@pacificeducationinstitute.org

Collaborate

Community collaborators are essential to PEI programs. To partner with us on a new initiative or to provide Washington students with integrated, locally relevant, career connected learning, contact **info@pacificeducationinstitute.org**.

Learn

Looking for professional learning opportunities? Please visit our event calendar:
pacificeducationinstitute.org

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pacificeducationinstitute.org