



Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

Outdoor, Environmental, and Sustainability Education

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Photo by Ahmed on UnSplash https://unsplash.com/photos/a-rainbow-is-seen-in-the-water-from-a-boat-ErIF4PnLuss?utm_content=creditCopyText&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=unsplash

Midwinter Wonders

Stepping outside across much of Washington this early February, most are greeted in the mornings with brisk temperatures and heavy frost, icicles, snow, or ice, and a welcome sunny sky. The sun striking the ice crystals on frost creates a smattering of crystalline sparkles across the surface of lawns, roads, rooftops, fields, and forests. Recently, those sparkles shone red, orange, gold, green, blue, purple, and diamond, and caused me to think of the phenomena of prisms and light as it shines through various surfaces. There is much to wonder about in nature, and nature creates a variety of phenomena for students to engage with locally. There is so much to notice if we can slow down and pay attention.

Time outdoors can promote a sense of wonder, joy, peace, curiosity, excitement, and so much more. What is helping spark a sense of wonder for you and your students lately? Are there tools and resources we can provide through this newsletter? What topics would you like us to address?

Email us your ideas at Elizabeth.Schmitz@k12.wa.us and Sheila.Wilson@k12.wa.us.

Resources

Superintendent Reykdal Provides Guidance: Protections for Immigrant Students



Excerpt from the [press release](#): Across the country, public schools have a constitutional and moral obligation to provide a free, high-quality public education to all students residing within their school district boundaries. State and federal law prohibit public school districts from discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin; and state law further prohibits discrimination on the basis of citizenship or immigration status.

In response to conversations and actions underway at the federal level...the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) released [guidance on state and federal protections for immigrant students in Washington's K–12 public schools](#).

The guidance provides school districts with a roadmap of requirements related to student privacy, access to educational services, and immigration enforcement on school campuses.

"We are receiving a lot of questions and concerns from schools, families, legislators, community members, and other partners," said State Superintendent Chris Reykdal. "As we monitor the actions of the new federal administration, I want to be clear: Washington state is and will remain a state that is unequivocally committed to supporting **all** of our students and their families."

For More Information

[Protections for Immigrant Students in Washington's K–12 Public Schools](#)

[Keep Washington Working Act: Guidance, Model Policies, and Best Practices for Public Schools](#) (Attorney General's Office)

OSPI's Guidance for Supporting Students with Disabilities in Outdoor Education



Students who participate in outdoor learning are more likely to graduate, show gains in social and emotional learning, develop healthy relationships with peers, and have higher academic achievements. Outdoor learning provides opportunities for students to develop leadership and collaboration skills by engaging in hands-on, real-world learning

with their peers.

As full members of school communities, students with disabilities have the right to access and make progress in the general education curriculum, regardless of the instructional setting. The purpose of [OSPI's Guidance for Supporting Students with Disabilities in Outdoor Education](#), is to help ensure educators are prepared to welcome all students, including those with disabilities who are eligible for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan, into outdoor learning

opportunities and to raise awareness that there is grant funding for a wide variety of supports, from specialized equipment to staff time and more. The assumption must be that students with diverse needs will enter the outdoor learning space and have choice with diverse options for the ways they engage in outdoor learning.

Coming soon, a similar document specific to informal and nonformal educators. Want to learn more? Contact Sheila Wilson (sheila.wilson@k12.wa.us or 360-561-0203).

Establishing the Outdoor Learning Grant Program- Report is Out!



Did you know more that more than 28,000 students have spent more than 3 million hours outdoors with the support of 810 schools, tribes, outdoor schools, nonprofits, and agencies through OSPI's Outdoor Learning Grant Program? Teachers are re-inspired, students are more engaged, and schools are making positive impacts in their communities and local ecosystems. Learn more in the [Establishing the Outdoor Learning Grant Program Legislative Report](#).

Questions? Reach out to Sheila Wilson (sheila.wilson@k12.wa.us or 360-561-0203).

Environmental, Sustainability, and Outdoor Education Directory

Learn more about the directory, where to find it, how to use it, and how to join to promote your organization's resources. For best outcomes, join from a computer with high quality internet if possible. Free to attend, but registration is required to join most of these.



Office Hours for Technical Assistance with partner GenThrive

- Thursday, February 27, 10–11 am on Zoom: [Register here](#)
- Outdoor Learning focus: Monday, March 9, 4–5 pm on Zoom: [Join here](#)
- Environmental and Sustainability Education focus: Thursday, March 20, noon–1 pm on Zoom: [Register here](#)
- Tuesday, April 8, 11–noon on Zoom: [Register here](#)
- Monday, April 14, 10–11 am on Zoom: [Register here](#)

Questions? Email Elizabeth.Schmitz@k12.wa.us or Sheila.Wilson@k12.wa.us

Climate, Equity, and Justice Map



Participants in the directory are listed on the map, which also contains environmental information and datasets related to public health, environmental risks, natural resources, and more. For best outcomes, join from a computer with high quality internet if possible. Free to attend, but registration is required to join most of these.

Office Hours for Technical Assistance with partner GenThrive:

- Wednesday, March 5, noon–1 pm on Zoom: [Register here](#)
- Outdoor Learning focus: Monday, March 9, 4–5 pm on Zoom: [Click here to join](#)
- Environmental and Sustainability Education focus: Thursday, March 20, noon–1 pm on Zoom: [Register here](#)
- Monday, April 7, 1–2 pm on Zoom: [Register here](#)
- Monday, April 14, 1–2 pm on Zoom: [Register here](#)

Questions? Contact Elizabeth.Schmitz@k12.wa.us or Sheila.Wilson@k12.wa.us

Workshops, Conferences, and More

Waste Not, Want Not: Resources to Reduce Organic Waste and Produce Compost

Join the Department of Ecology to strategize about waste reduction efforts: [Join the Department of Ecology at the Organics Regional Summits in Spring 2025](#)

Learn more about the [Use Food Well Washington Plan to reduce food waste](#).

For 5th Grade educators: Washington Open Educational Resources Commons Resources for Composting and Organics Waste Reduction produced by OSPI partners with funding for ClimeTime, Integrated STEM, and Equitable STEM:

- [Zombie Guacamole](#)
 - [Elementary Assessment: Trash Talk](#)
 - [Regenerative Agriculture Solutions-Oriented Storyline](#)
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Nonformal/Informal Science Educator + Teacher Workshops



OSPI is offering a series of Nonformal - Informal Science Educators + Teachers (NISE-T) workshops around the state! Come explore with us! Join local community-based organizations, tribes, agencies, and OSPI for exciting learning experiences. Learn to lead students in place-based learning and civic engagement with exemplary, place-based instructional routines that embody Culturally Responsive Education strategies. Our aim is to ensure each student in Washington receives outdoor learning opportunities aligned with state standards and environmental education best practices, rooted in local phenomena. Discover outdoor and environmental and sustainability education at its best!

- [February 26 with Puget Sound ESD 121 Bridging Science Education for Justice: Connecting Communities, Sovereignty, and Equity](#) (filling fast!)
- [March 13 with ESD 123 at the Water and Environmental Center in Walla Walla](#)
- **April 10 Community Night [Fish War](#) showing hosted by Willie Frank III and April 11 NISE-T Workshop at Paschal Sherman Indian School with North Central ESD 171**
- **August 5-7 NISE-T Summer Institute, with ESD 105, Yakima and surrounding area**

April 25–26 in Vancouver, WA: PRESENT at and/or ATTEND OSPI's 3rd Annual Climate Education Summit



Washington's 3rd Climate Education Summit is happening on April 25–26 at WSU-Vancouver in Vancouver, WA! Friday April 25 is an optional day of outdoor learning field experiences and a climate speaker. Saturday, April 26 will feature a keynote speaker on salmon recovery, lunch, a non-profit climate learning exhibit hall, and multiple climate learning sessions for participants to choose from. There is no registration fee, and attendees will get free STEM clock hours.

[Apply to attend here!](#)

- **Applications are due March 21, 2025.**
- Applicants will be notified of their status on a rolling basis beginning February 4, 2025.

[Apply to present here!](#)

- OSPI seeks presenters to share during 50-minute sessions on Saturday. We are looking for sessions on any topic found in the [2024 Climate Literacy](#)

[Guide](#) and/or K–12 Climate Education in classrooms and informal or non-formal settings.

- **Presenter proposals are due February 23, 2025.**
- Proposal acceptance emails will be sent by March 7, 2025.

Registration and Travel Cost Information:

- The conference is grant-supported, so there is no registration fee.
- Clock hours for Washington educators will be free of charge.
- Travel, lodging, and substitute costs cannot be covered by OSPI.
- Please see this [support document](#) to reference when discussing attendance with your district.

Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda: Subject Matter Expert Workshops this Spring

Join the Puget Sound Partnership and Subject Matter Experts this February and March to discuss action items in the Puget Sound Recovery Agenda including education, habitat restoration, and more.



[Learn more and sign up for workshops here.](#)

No Cost Outdoor Learning Professional Development Opportunities For K-12 Educators & Community-Based Organizations



Offered by South Whidbey Elementary School, OSPI STEM Lighthouse School, and Community Partner Organizations, this professional development series includes:

- No Cost Clock Hours
- Hands on learning experiences with experienced educators and organization
- Funds to cover substitute costs for participation
- Lunch and snacks provided
- Relevant lesson plans and curriculum provided to participants
- Ongoing support for development of outdoor learning programs for your students

Outdoor Education & Social Emotional Learning

Friday, March 28, 2025: 9:30 am–3:30 pm

Organic Farm School, Langley, WA

Exploring the Salish Sea with Students

Friday, April 11, 2025: 9:30 am–3:30 pm

Whidbey Camano Land Trust Keystone Land Preserve, Coupeville, WA

Developing Meaningful Overnight Community-Based Learning Programs

Thursday, April 24, 2025: 10:00 am–3:00 pm Camp Casey Conference Center, Coupeville, WA

Partnering with State Parks in Your Community

Wednesday, April 30, 2025: 9:30 am–3:00 pm

Deception Pass State Park, Oak Harbor, WA

South Whidbey School Farms in Action

Friday, May 9, 2025: 9:00 am–3:00 pm

South Whidbey Elementary School Farm, Langley, WA

Details and registration at swesnorth.sw.wednet.edu/stem

or contact Susie Richards, Principal, srichards@sw.wednet.edu

Free Invasive Ant Surveillance and Identification Virtual Workshop



The Washington Invasive Species Council and Washington State University invite you to an upcoming free **Invasive Ant Surveillance and Identification Virtual Workshop** on **March 11, 2025**, from **9 am–1 pm**. The agenda includes an exciting lineup of nationwide speakers, including experts from Hawaii,

Texas, Florida, and Washington. Learn more about different invasive ants, identification, and their wide range of impacts. Horizon scanning and understanding the threat is key to early detection. An emphasis on making a quality report will conclude the workshop to encourage our first detectors to promptly report any sightings. Participants will leave the workshop with a better understanding of ant biology, what's at risk, and key invasive ant species of concern. Pesticide recertification credits from the Washington Department of Agriculture have been requested.

[View the agenda and register here.](#)

This workshop is open to professionals, volunteers, and the public.

YMCA Earth Service Corps to Host Annual Environmental Symposium



The YMCA Environmental Symposium gathers passionate, motivated student leaders at the University of Washington to learn about the environmental issues facing our world and how to create a sustainable future for our schools, communities and beyond! Participants will take part in hands-on workshops led by local organizations and designed to educate students about environmental topics as well as give teens the skills they need to address environmental issues in their schools and communities. Youth will be

networking with peers and adults and gaining tools to create real, positive change. Lunch will be provided with vegetarian options available. Free raffle of outdoor and environmental prizes for all in attendance.

WHAT: YMCA Environmental Symposium

WHO: Youth grades 8–12

WHEN: Friday, March 28, from 8:30 am–1:30 pm

WHERE: University of Washington, Mary Gates Hall, 1851 NE Grant Ln, Seattle, WA 98105

REGISTER: Participants can register [online](#), by calling 206-587-6116, or emailing yesc@seattleyymca.org. **Due: March 14.** Space is limited so you are encouraged to register quickly! For field trip/group registration, or for further information, please contact Chelsey Wheeler, YMCA Earth Service Corps Director, 206.466.1048 or via email: cwheeler@seattleyymca.org.

Contests and Grants

Artwork Contest: Collaborating for Biodiversity

Collaborating for Biodiversity is a K–12 youth art project celebrating species protected by the Endangered Species Act. You are invited to submit artworks created in collaboration with two or more youth artists. We've created *Collaborating for Biodiversity* in honor of the 20th Anniversary of Endangered Species Day, Friday, May 16, 2025.



Learn more and submit artwork here: [Collaborating for Biodiversity - Endangered Species Coalition](#)

OSPI's **Outdoor Learning Grant Program** supports hands-on, experiential education in outdoor settings, enhances 21st century learning skills by promoting critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving through field studies; fosters social-emotional learning; and develops leadership abilities.

Environmental and Sustainability Education supports academic success, life-long learning, and environmentally literate graduates capable of applying knowledge of ecological, economic, and socio-cultural systems to meet current and future community needs.
