



Considerations for Outdoor Learning

"Outdoor Education supports the Whole Child to engage in authentic living and learning that reinforces interdisciplinary experiences, naturally!"
– Dr. Roberta McFarland, Director, Waskowitz Outdoor Programs, Highline SD

Public schools may develop curricula that links student learning to outdoor-based activities.

- Student learning experiences should align to academic learning standards and
- May include locally administered assessment.

Integration of Outdoor Learning into Standards:

Outdoor Learning supports implementation of multiple content areas and standards.

Here are some examples:

K-12 Environmental and Sustainability Education Learning Standards:

- Students engage in inquiry and systems thinking and use information gained through learning experiences in, about, and for the environment to understand the structure, components, and processes of natural and human-built environments. (Standard 2)

Washington State K-12 Physical Education (PE) learning standards already recognize the importance of Outdoor Learning. Two of several examples include:

- Demonstrate competency in activity-specific movement skills in two or more outdoor pursuits. PE1.3.HS1
- Implement safe protocols in self-selected outdoor pursuits. PE2.10.8

Washington State Early Learning and Development Guideline example:

- Provide daily physical activity outdoors. Continue exploring natural places outdoors, such as parks. (pg. 74).

Current Instructional Practices in our Districts (examples):

Outdoor Learning can occur at any grade and with almost any content area:

- Tiny Trees is a unique cross-content outdoor-based preschool in local parks (OSPI

YouTube); in another early childhood example, the [Squaxin Island Child Development Center](#) integrates developmentally appropriate tribal culture into outdoor preschool, one of the DCYF Outdoor Preschool Pilot programs.

- Pullman Public Schools is one of many districts participating in [FieldSTEM](#) studies, with multiple grade levels engaged in interdisciplinary field-based activities connected to local environmental, agricultural, and natural resource jobs.
- Schools and districts partner with [Washington Green Schools](#) to use their school buildings, grounds, homes, and communities as a learning laboratory ([Spokane example](#)).
- Voices From the Field is a partnership between IslandWood Environmental Education center and OSPI's Migrant Education program; students stay at IslandWood ([Tonasket Example](#)).
- Tahoma High School's Outdoor Academy aligns instruction in Physical Education standards with Next Generation Science and ELA standards into the [great outdoors](#).
- Highline's Camp Waskowitz runs their [outdoor education program](#) for 5th-6th grades as well as training their high school students (Waskowitz Environmental Learning School) as counselors-in-training.

Equity Practices:

Outdoor learning benefits the physical, social, and emotional health, as well as closing the access gap for students of color and students with disabilities:

- [State of Play](#) report shows students of color have less access to Parks and green space.
- [Outdoors for All](#) brings adaptive outdoor recreation opportunities to several school districts. ([2019 annual report](#))

Resources:

- [North American Association for Environmental Education](#)
- [Outdoor Preschool Pilot Standards](#) from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families
- [Washington Early Learning & Development Guidelines](#) (see pages 74-76)
- [Connections among WaKIDS Teaching Strategies GOLD® Objectives for Development and Learning, Washington State K-12 Learning Standards, and Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines \(May 2015\).](#)

For More Information, contact:

Environmental Science: Elizabeth.Schmitz@k12.wa.us, (360) 725-4976

Health & Physical Education: Ken.Turner@k12.wa.us, (360) 725-4977

Early Learning Education: Gretchen.Stahrbreunig@k12.wa.us; (360) 725-0455