



Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

2SHB 2078 (Outdoor Learning Grant Prg)

1. **Purpose:**

The purpose of this proviso is to implement and support 2SHB 2078, Outdoor Learning Grant Program. OSPI contracted with the Recreation and Conservation office and the Washington School Principals Education Foundation to administer the multi-tiered program.

2. **Description of services provided:**

The new Outdoor Learning Grant Program funded three programs in its inaugural year: Outdoor Learning Grants (OLG) for Schools and Districts at OSPI for \$1.95M; OLG for CBOs at the Recreation and Conservation Office for \$1.85M, and Overnight Outdoor Educational Experiences (OOEE) through Washington State Principal's Education Foundation for \$5.9M. For all three programs, demand outstripped funding available. A total of 71,706 students were served this first school year and there is great potential for growth.

OSPI's Outdoor Learning Grants opened in mid-October, 2022, and funds were dispersed by March 1, 2023. 71 projects from \$5,000-\$35,000 were funded to serve 26,187 students. An alternative high school in Easton engaged students in social-emotional learning while learning bike maintenance and bike riding skills to reach their Field STEM site. In Ellensburg, Mount Adams, and Neah Bay, students grew native plants, created medicine, and harvested food to share with their communities in partnership with local tribes. In Chehalis, Nisqually, Pullman, Spokane, and Yakima, students worked alongside natural resource professionals to research and restore local habitats. Four projects specifically served tribal youth, connecting them to traditional ecological knowledge and natural resources management as is their sovereign right and potential career path. Forty-one projects served rural schools, connecting youth to natural resources management, agricultural phenomenon, and their local ecosystems through the lens of science learning.

The second program, **Outdoor Learning Grants contracted through RCO**, recruited grant applicants with a mass email announcement utilizing their PRISM listserv (5,000+ contacts); Outreach to 29 federally recognized tribal chairs and tribal education department directors; Meetings with the Washington Outdoor Schools Coalition, WA School Principles Education Foundation, Washington Recreation and Parks Association; Hosting a grant Webinar for 376 registrants, 250 attendees, and more that viewed the recording.



Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

A total of 72 applications were submitted to RCO by the September 1, 2022 deadline from a wide range of organizations, primarily nonprofits, such as outdoor schools, environmental education organizations, community-based organizations, regional fisheries enhancement groups, land trusts and three. The total funding request for all 72 applications was \$8,030,448. The ranked list including the 17 finalists and scoring detail can be found on RCO's Outdoor Learning Grant [website](#).

More than 22,039 students in 174 schools, 52 school districts, and eight Educational Service Districts were served with more than 197,000 hours of outdoor education provided. Fourteen Title 1 schools participated, and nine rural schools. Four projects focused on Native Youth. The third and largest program that provided the most in-depth learning for students was the **Overnight Outdoor Education Experience contracted with Outdoor Schools WA (OSWA)**. OSWA reduces barriers to attend outdoor school by subsidizing expenses. Their funding expanded existing programs, and jump-started schools who have never been to outdoor school. OSWA held week-long Outdoor School trainings to build a community of practice statewide. They created safety and environmental education standards for outdoor schools to ensure all students are welcomed to safe and enriching experiences. As a result, more than 23,000 students experienced outdoor school this past school year, with deep science learning in context of the natural world, social-emotional learning with their peers, while creating a sense of community and memories that will last a lifetime.

OSWA aims to support every school district in our state in their outdoor school planning and implementation by providing reimbursements for outdoor school fees, based on need. Schools are matched with outdoor school sites, based on the desired outcomes districts have for their students, travel time, and cultural considerations. OSWA serves as a clearing house of information in site details, lessons, information for parents, publications on outdoor learning, and pro-outdoor school literature. OSWA leverages the power of involving high school leaders as mentors to younger students at outdoor school. [This link](#) connects to their scope and sequence for high school mentor training, a guide to recruiting, selecting, training, and supporting mentors from local high schools.

OSWA's week-long trainings focused on all aspects of outdoor school, (safety, meal routines, games, cabin etiquette, etc.) with an emphasis on learning standards. Participants learned the importance of connecting lessons to what students are learning at school, rather than being a stand-alone experiences. OSWA drew on expertise from OSPI's staff in Science, Outdoor Education, and Environmental and Sustainability Program. Pacific Education Institute, and community-based organizations, such as Garden Raised Urban Bounty (GRUB). GRuB taught participants about native plants and Indigenous food sovereignty. Spokane Tribal Elder Warren Seyler taught tribal history to the local educators, and use of OSPI Since Time Immemorial Curriculum provided insight on how to incorporate Native American culture, ways of knowing, and history into outdoor learning.



Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

OSWA's developed standards for outdoor schools titled Characteristics of High-Quality Outdoor Schools which has three sections: place-based education, content, and learning requirements. OSWA success stories include Kent and Yakima School Districts, both uniquely serving students traditionally underserved in science, large in scale, and new to Outdoor School.

The Outdoor Learning Grant Program connects schools and students to local organizations with varying degrees of expertise in teaching the Washington state learning standards with fidelity. To support the tribes, outdoor schools, and other community partners offering these outdoor learning experiences, OSPI hosted a series of nine workshops, one in each Educational Service District. These workshops develop a community of practice in each region to ensure that students receive high-quality outdoor learning opportunities aligned with standards, considered best practices in environmental education, and anchored in local, relevant phenomena. OSPI also hosts regular meetings for the 25 member [HB2078 Advisory Committee](#), with representatives from state agencies and community-based organizations that serve similar student audiences, as well as OSPI content area experts. Through this committee, we have been able to guide the process of implementing the Outdoor Learning Grant with fidelity to the vision of the legislation: equity, and equitable geographic distribution of funds for all students across the state.

3. **Criteria for receiving services and/or grants:**

The legislation prioritizes student populations underserved in science. Research shows that outdoor learning benefits all students, and students underserved in science benefit the most. This is known as the equigenic effect. For both grant programs, eligible grantees serve pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade experiential youth outdoor education program activities learning in, for, and about the outdoors. For OSPI's Outdoor Learning Grants, applicants need to be from a rural, tribal, or alternative school, and/or be a school or district at or above the statewide average for one or more of the prioritized student audiences. Applications were reviewed to determine state learning standards were adequately addressed, and engaged students in real-world, hands-on science learning within a reasonable budget.

For RCO's Outdoor Learning Grants, eligible applicants included, federally recognized tribes, outdoor education providers, local governments (cities, towns, counties, port districts, park and recreation districts, etc.), nonprofit organizations (501(c)3, 501(c)1, or 501(c)4 tax-exempt organizations), or state agencies. The grant application process was highly competitive, with only 17 of 72 applications funded. Funding prioritized students historically underserved in science.



Washington Office of Superintendent of PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

To best serve the student groups listed in the legislation, OSWA developed a funding formula that allocates the most robust funding to schools/districts with the most need. Schools with lower socioeconomics or with high populations of students of color qualified for funding that covers all outdoor school expenses: program fees, transportation, meals/lodging, gear, teacher stipends, extra staffing (if needed), and substitute costs (if needed). Schools who had lesser need may be allotted funds to cover transportation.

Beneficiaries in the 2022-23 School Year:

- Number of School Districts: 214
- Number of Schools: 661
- Number of Students: 71,775
- Number of Educators: 942
- Other: Community partners - 185

4. Are federal or other funds contingent on state funding?

No

5. State funding history:

EU2 – 2SHB 2078 (Outdoor Learning Grant Prg)

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2023	\$195,000	\$148,223

EV2 – Outdoor Learning Grants

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2023	\$3,903,000	\$3,817,223

EW2 – Outdoor Education Experiences

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2023	\$5,902,000	\$5,898,425

6. Number of beneficiaries (e.g., school districts, schools, students, educators, other) history:

Fiscal Year	Number of Schools
-------------	-------------------



Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

2022-23, OSPI Outdoor Learning Grants	63 school districts, 179 schools, 26,187 students, 2,670 educators
2022-23, RCO Outdoor Learning Grants	52 school districts, 174 schools, 22,039 students
2022-23, OSWA Outdoor School	99 school districts, 308 schools, 23,549 students, 942 teachers

7. **Programmatic changes since inception (if any):**

N/A

8. **Program evaluation or evaluation of major findings:**

Across all three programs, teachers are qualitatively reporting improvements in students' behavior and academic engagement. Outdoor learning provides powerful context for curriculum integration in science, math, ELA, social studies, Social-Emotional Learning, and Since Time Immemorial curriculum. Teachers also report outdoor learning increases opportunities for and actualization of friendship development and classroom unity. A teacher from East Grays Harbor High School reports "This project truly enhanced our programs of learning and inspired our students to try things that previously seemed outside of their comfort zones. It created opportunities for students to work together and with our community partners which developed their relationship skills and built their self-confidence, as well as their academic confidence!" Chief Leschi Schools shared: "This trip was a rich, transformative experience for all who participated. Students learned so much about their culture and traditions and also the environment. The canoe helps them see the importance of everyone working together, and how their contributions are valuable to all." A Tacoma teacher writes "This funding has been CRUCIAL in the work of breaking down barriers for underrepresented students in STEM and the outdoors, creating lasting community connection". White Swan High School in Mount Adams School District, one of our most racially diverse and highest need schools in the state, utilized the funding as an antidote to absenteeism, and saw dramatic increases in student engagement.

The majority of OSPI and RCO grantees partnered with additional community-based organizations, upwards of 200 different partners, expanding the impact of the funding. Grant funding increased accessibility. For example, educational material was translated into 7 languages by one King County grantee who also used grant funding to purchase two all-terrain wheelchairs for student and chaperone use. Other grantees used funds to train staff in Wilderness First Aid, Wilderness First Responder, and/or trauma-informed care.



Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

9. **Major challenges faced by the program:**

Across all three programs, there are consistent challenges in both bus and substitute teacher availability, costs, and unpredictability. Buses are necessary to transport students to the field sites for habitat restoration, trail building, garden/agricultural activities, science learning in the context of the real-world (forestry, snow science, habitat analysis surveys, water testing, etc.) and other forms of Field STEM and service learning. School and staff comfort levels taking students outside limited student participation on several occasions. In some regions, schools aren't aware of high-quality curriculum to implement outdoor learning successfully, which points to the need for more professional development.

Since we are tied to the fiscal year of the state with a June 30th deadline for completing activities and spending, summer activities become next to impossible to implement. This is especially problematic when we are looking at summer programs designed to help underserved students retrieve high school credit. In these same programs, grantees and schools are hoping to pay students to participate, as this is also an equity issue. For many students, they can't afford to not have a summer job. Our understanding is that these funds are not eligible for student stipends.

10. **Future opportunities:**

Starting this fall, all participating students aforementioned will be flagged in OSPI's Comprehensive Education and Research System. Then we can begin tracking the expected student outcomes of 2SHB2078: improved grades, behavior, attendance, and eventually, graduation rates. We are also launching a survey to capture teacher and administrator impressions of other benefits, such as stress reduction, inclusion, and deeper engagement with place and community.

School districts find that having a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) or another form of district-level outdoor learning coordinator greatly benefits efforts to incorporate professionals from tribes, natural resource agencies, and local nonprofits with expertise in local ecosystems and environmental science issues in their communities. This adds the valuable element of career awareness to outdoor learning. TOSA's are also able to coordinate volunteer participation, such as parents, retired teachers/natural resource professionals, local college students, community service organizations, etc.

There are classes underway for high school students to earn credits for serving as counselors at outdoor school students through Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. A CTE Pathway for high school students is under development, possibly even through remote learning instead of having the opportunity dependent upon where a student happens to be enrolled in school. Similarly, there are a few programs for our Native American students that



Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

enable them to earn P.E., history, and science credits for cultural activities (Canoe Journey, Huckleberry Camp, Deer Camp, etc.) We aim to reduce barriers for our Native American communities to accomplish this by creating systems within OSPI that make it a clear and reasonable process for any tribe or school to attain.

11. Statutory and/or budget language:

\$10,000,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for the office to administer an outdoor learning grant program to develop and support outdoor educational experiences for students in Washington public schools. The office must award grants to eligible school districts and outdoor education program providers starting in the 2022-23 school year. The office may consult with the Washington recreation and conservation office on outdoor learning program grants. Of the amounts provided in this subsection:

(a) \$195,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for the office to implement Second Substitute House Bill No. 2078 (outdoor learning grant prg.). If the bill is not enacted by June 30, 2022, the amount provided in this subsection shall lapse.

(b) \$3,903,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for the outdoor learning grant program, which consists of two types of grants:

(i) Allocation-based grants for school districts to develop or support outdoor educational experiences; and

(ii) Competitive grants for outdoor education providers that are designed to support existing capacity and to increase future capacity for outdoor learning experiences.

(c) \$5,902,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for the outdoor education experiences program. The office must prioritize providing the program to fifth and sixth grade students in high poverty schools, expanding to other fifth and sixth grade students subject to available funds.

12. Other relevant information:

OSPI staff had the opportunity to present at the Public Performance Review July 19, 2023. See that video and slides [here](#). Jayden Harper, a student from Lincoln High School in Tacoma, was invited to speak to Governor Inslee to share the impacts of the Outdoor Learning Grant on students in Washington. The governor was thanked by his family for creating opportunities for Jaden that they never dreamed of. They struggle financially and were worried for Jaden's future. In less than half a year Jaden not only attended all of the field trips, but he landed a paid internship with Communities for a Healthy Bay for the summer and sat directly beside Gov. Inslee. He now has aspirations far above what he originally believed of himself.



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

13. Schools/districts receiving assistance:

[preliminaryfy23state-fundedprovisograntawardsupdated-42823.xlsx \(live.com\)](#)

14. Program Contact Information:

Name:	Sheila Wilson
Title:	Outdoor Education Program Manager
Phone:	(360) 561-0203
Email:	Sheila.wilson@k12.wa.us