

Happy New Year from Your Friends at OSPI!



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**  
Outdoor, Environmental, and Sustainability Education

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*Photo of Aurora Borealis, also known as the Northern Lights, CC-BY Vincent Guth on Unsplash.*

**Happy New Year!**

Happy New Year from your colleagues at OSPI!

2025 started out with a display of Northern Lights over Washington. Were you lucky enough to spot them? This spectacular phenomenon is a great opportunity to spark fascination about the natural world for people of all ages.

For K12 lesson plans about the Aurora Borealis, [check out this search conducted on the National Open Educational Resource Commons](#).

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**Join us in 2025...**

Now is the time to plant seeds of inspiration, hope, and action for 2025. What are your needs, dreams, and plans for the new year? How can our offices of Outdoor Learning or Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE) support your efforts to achieve the best possible outcomes for your students and communities? We want to hear from you!



Join us for office hours in 2025, email us anytime, or attend events around the state. We hope to see you this year.

Outdoor Learning 2025 Office Hours:

- [First and third Monday of every month, 3-4:30 pm](#)

ESE 2025 Drop-In Office Hours

Join at any time to ask questions or share your environmental and sustainability education highlights from the field. Free registration is required to track participation.

- [Wednesday, January 15, 3:30-5 pm](#)
- [Wednesday, February 19, 3:30-5 pm](#)
- [Thursday, March 20, 3:30-5 pm](#)

Join us for casual conversation, networking, and celebrations over lunch with ESE and Outdoor Learning Brown Bag Lunch Hours, from Noon to 1 pm:

- [Thursday, February 20](#): General meet and greet
- [Thursday, March 20](#): General meet and greet
- [Thursday, April 17](#): OSPI and US-ED Green Ribbon Schools Applicant Showcase and State Green Leader Recognition (Federal Honorees to be announced on Earth Day, April 22, 2025)
- [Thursday, June 5](#): General meet and greet

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### Apply now! USDA Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant



The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program is designed to increase the availability of local foods in schools and connect students to the sources of their food through education, taste tests, school gardens, field trips, and local food sourcing for school meals.

Applicants may apply to one of the following grant tracks that best suits their project. Use the RFA Grant Track Decision document to help determine what grant to apply for. **Due: January 10, 2025.**

**Implementation Grant:** Improve access to local foods in eligible CNP sites through comprehensive farm to school programming that includes **both** local sourcing and agricultural education efforts. Award Amount: \$50,000 – \$500,000

**Turnkey Grant:** Award Amount – Up to \$50,000

- **Action Planning:** Develop a roadmap for launching or enhancing farm to school activities.
- **Agricultural Education:** Incorporate agricultural education into curricula.
- **Edible Gardens:** Implement a food production operation.

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#### **ELA Performance Tasks for Bilingual Educators K-5, January 14**

Calling all dual language and ELL educators! You're invited to the upcoming bilingual (Spanish) workshop that will demonstrate Pacific Education Institute's (PEI) K-5 ELA Performance Tasks resources in Spanish and English



- Tuesday, January 14, 4:30-6:30 pm
- Virtual, via Zoom (link will be sent after registration)
- To register, go to this [link](#).
- Participants will receive two Washington State STEM Clock Hours at no cost for educators and PEI's ELA Performance Tasks Resources for K-5 in Spanish and English

During the workshop, facilitators Lourdes Flores and Emily Newman will share PEI resources for ELA Performance Tasks in English and Spanish and will demonstrate some of the FieldSTEM activities from the resources. Participants will have the opportunity to brainstorm how to implement them in their current curriculum with fellow participants.

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**Applications for OSPI's 3rd Annual Climate Education Summit Are Open!**



Washington's 3rd Climate Education Summit is happening on April 25-26 in Vancouver, Washington.

Friday, April 25, will consist 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 you to choose from. Be on the lookout for opportunities to present, because we hope you will share any climate work you are already doing in your classroom!

Apply [here to attend!](#)

Find more ClimeTime professional learning workshops on our [calendar of events](#).

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### **Save the Dates: Nonformal/Informal Science Educators + Teachers Workshops Near You!**

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!



Save the dates, registration coming soon!

- February 26 with Puget Sound ESD 121 at Seward Park Audubon Center, Seattle
- March 13 with ESD 123 at the Water and Environmental Center in Walla Walla
- Spring TBD with North Central ESD 171 at Paschal Sherman Indian School
- August 5-7 with ESD 105, Summer Institute, location TBD.

Questions? Care to collaborate and share your work? Reach out to Sheila Wilson ([sheila.wilson@k12.wa.us](mailto:sheila.wilson@k12.wa.us)) or Elizabeth Schmitz ([elizabeth.schmitz@k12.wa.us](mailto:elizabeth.schmitz@k12.wa.us))

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### **5 Free Winter Outdoor Learning Virtual Workshops!**



The Outdoor Learning School and Store just released **5 x 60-minute FREE [Outdoor Learning Virtual Workshops](#)**:

- January 14: [Outdoor Learning in the Early Years](#)
- February 4: [Climate and Sustainability Education Games and Resources](#)
- February 11: [Disability Justice in Outdoor Learning](#)
- February 18: [Indigenous Resources for the Early & Elementary Years](#)
- February 25: [Teaching Ideas and Activities for using Sit Spots](#)

All [Virtual Workshops](#) include entry for some **great prizes** and a **Certificate of Attendance**. If you can't attend live you can register, and they will send you the link to the **recording**.

View **ALL** of the Outdoor Learning School and Store upcoming [workshops, courses and events](#).

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### **Storming the Sound 2025 Conference**

**Educating for the Environment: *Ideas, problems, solutions, and resources to restore our world***

Storming the Sound is a conference for environmental educators in the north Puget Sound region, including the counties of Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, Island, Jefferson and San Juan. Every January teachers, environmental organizations and students gather in La Conner to share their interest and expertise in environmental education.

When: January 24, 2025, at the Skagit Valley College in Mt. Vernon, WA.

Learn more, submit a session proposal, or register today.

[Storming the Sound - Northwest Aquatic and Marine Educators](#)



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### **Virtual Habitat Steward Training**



Are you interested in creating habitat for wildlife? Do you want to do your part to keep Washington wild? **Now is your chance to become a Habitat Steward™!** The National Wildlife Federation is offering a specialized, multi-week *virtual* training to teach you how to create and restore wildlife habitat in backyards, schoolyards, balconies, and other places in your community. The training consists of four classes, so make sure you will be able to attend all four dates! This virtual workshop will be from **6:30-9 pm** on Tuesday and Thursday evenings on February 4, 6, 11, and 13. Optional field trips and volunteering opportunities pertaining to your learning will be available as well!

Benefits include: a comprehensive, digital training manual with local resources, instruction from local professionals, engaging field opportunities, certification as a habitat steward volunteer, and continued support from National Wildlife Federation staff. A variety of topics will be presented on habitat restoration, Pacific Northwest ecology and wildlife, natural yard care, invasive plants, native plants, and much more!

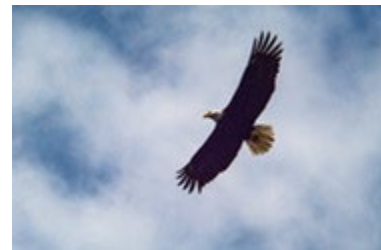
The cost of the training is \$20. *Note: scholarships are available! No one will be turned down due to lack of funds.* Once registered the Zoom link will be emailed to you. To register for the training, please visit <https://feb2025.bpt.me/> or contact Guinevere Unterbrink at [WAEducation@nwf.org](mailto:WAEducation@nwf.org).

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### Save the dates for City Nature Challenge 2025

**City Nature Challenge 2025's theme is** Bringing the world together for biodiversity!

City Nature Challenge (CNC) is an annual international event to collaboratively record as many wildlife observations as possible during a four-day challenge. People from all over the world, including all of Snohomish, King and Pierce counties, explore nature in their neighborhoods and cities to find and document wildlife. Every year, people record how many observations of nature are gathered, how many different species are documented, and how many people help this global scientific community better understand nature all over the world. With this data we can better protect urban nature globally.



*"One of the best global experiences of people participating in a common goal around the whole world!" - City Nature Challenge Organizer from Barcelona*

### Join for an online CNC Educator/Group Leader Orientation

**Tuesday, March 4, 3:30 - 4:30 pm**

Register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUtc-irrz8rE9SQd8MXPuzo4roUjNgOk9ul>

More information here:

- Woodland Park Zoo: <https://www.zoo.org/conservation/naturechallenge>
  - Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium: <https://www.pdza.org/event/city-nature-challenge/>
  - City Nature Challenge: <https://www.citynaturechallenge.org/>
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### Fun winter learning...hands-on snowflake lessons!



This [series of lessons](#) was designed for students in Grades 4-6 by Professor Tim Garrett with support from the National Science Foundation. Through hands-on activities, students will be able to describe snow crystals' six-sided symmetry, the formation of snowflake aggregates and "graupels," and to show how snowflake fall varies by type.

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*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.*

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*Note: Resources are provided for informational purposes and not as recommendations from OSPI. Resources referenced here may be for educators or parents/families and may not be intended for use in the classroom. We recommend reviewing all educational materials for alignment with district policy and state law before using them with students. Articles and other resources are provided for informational purposes and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints or policies of OSPI.*

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**ALL STUDENTS PREPARED FOR POST-SECONDARY PATHWAYS,  
CAREERS, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.**

Led by State Superintendent Chris Reykdal, OSPI oversees K-12 public education in Washington state. Our mission is to provide funding, resources, tools, data and technical assistance that enable educators to ensure students succeed in our public schools, are prepared to access post-secondary training and education, and are equipped to thrive in their careers and lives.



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