

What Parents Should Know About Residential Outdoor School in Oregon



What is Outdoor School?

It's School—Experienced in Ways Not Possible in the Classroom!

- Environmental science education for 5th or 6th grade students.
- Outdoor Field Study for five to six hours each day; with science focused lessons on soil, water, plants, and animals.
- Lessons could also incorporate math, social studies, and language arts.

Daily Life:

- Students sleep in cabins, eat together in a dining hall, study outdoors, and participate in other outdoor activities.

Multiple Days:

- Programs range from three to six days in length, depending on your school district.

Oregon Tradition:

- Outdoor school has over 60 years of history offering safe educational programs in Oregon!

Educational Benefits & Opportunities for Students who Attend Outdoor School:

Academic Achievement:

- Improved critical thinking in fields related to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

Learning Community:

- Increased classroom engagement and motivation following

successful science experiences and deepened relationships with teachers and peers.

Leadership and Employment Skills:

- Exposure to and first-hand experience with collaboration and leadership skills, which can result in increased self esteem and self sufficiency.
- Receive training in and the opportunity to practice potential employment skills for high-school student leaders.

Natural Resource Career Paths:

- Exposure to and understanding of natural resource careers like forestry, parks management, wildlife biology, marine ecology, resource management, farming, conservation.

Intercultural Appreciation:

- Meet and interact with people from diverse backgrounds. Build a positive, equitable learning culture based on inclusion and mutual respect.

Environmental Literacy:

- Build understanding, skills and motivation to make responsible decisions that consider relationships to natural systems, communities and future generations.

Health:

- Develop healthy habits that will last a lifetime by participating in active learning with plenty of movement.

Braun, S.M. (2019) Outdoor School for All: Diverse Programming and Outcomes in Oregon: 2018 Pilot Study Evaluation. Portland, Oregon. The Gray Family Foundation

Friends of Outdoor School (2015). Empirical Evidence Supporting Benefits of Outdoor School and Experiential Learning Programs. Retrieved from: <https://www.friendsofoutdoorschool.org/>

The OSU Extension Service Outdoor School program provides professional development for formal and non-formal natural resource educators (schools, districts, and providers), and funding to districts for their outdoor school experiences. Together we empower and support inclusive, impactful, and high quality outdoor school experiences for Oregon's youth.



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Life at Outdoor School—You Can Expect Students To:

Be Safe & Cared For:

- All programs provide 24 hour supervision of students, and the supervising employees, parent chaperones, or volunteer high school leaders should all pass appropriate background checks.
- Frequently the classes' teachers will attend with their students.
- Many programs have a Registered Nurse or some level of medical professional available on site to control/issue medications and address minor injuries or illnesses.

Sleep in Cabins:

- Cabin areas are separated by gender, with a typical cabin holding 8-12 students and 1-2 cabin leaders.

Be Outdoors During Day:

- Students will participate in five to six hours of outdoor field science studies daily in addition to other outdoor activities.

Be in School & Focused on Learning:

- Students attending outdoor school will learn science, history, language, and/or math in an engaging, active program.
- Students will not be using cell phones or video games. This is, for some, their first chance to be present in nature with friends and teachers.

Be Included:

- All students of all cultures, abilities and backgrounds should expect to feel welcome and included.

Be Social:

- Students will make friends, strengthen relationships, and have opportunities to lead and experience social-emotional growth.

Be Well Fed:

- All of your child's meals will be freshly made and any dietary restrictions they may have will be accommodated. At outdoor school, meals are eaten as a community with plenty of food for all.

Have Fun!

- With hands on science, campfires, hikes, songs and other recreational activities - these are examples of what you can experience at outdoor school!

Ways Your School, District, or Outdoor School Provider Can Support Your Family:

Host a Site Visit:

- Your district or provider can arrange for a day for parents or families to visit the outdoor school site.

Promote Clear and Frequent Communication:

- Call or write your district, school, or provider to ask questions. Let your child's teacher know if you have any questions or concerns. If translated materials are needed, please ask for them.

Provide Clothing, Boots & Sleeping Bags:

- Let teacher know if proper clothing or sleeping gear is needed; it can be arranged!

Ways Parents and Families can Support Your Student:

Send Personal Mail:

- Send them letters and care packages (send before they leave so they arrive while your child is at outdoor school!)

Provide Encouragement:

- Tell them you're excited for their adventure, that it's okay to be nervous, and that you know they're resilient and will do great!

Contact:

For information about the specific outdoor school program your child will attend, please contact their teacher or your home school district office.

To contact OSU Extension Service Outdoor School program:

Email: outdoorschool@oregonstate.edu

Or online at outdoorschool.oregonstate.edu

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