

**SOUTH METRO-SALEM
STEM PARTNERS**

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Xerox

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In4All
Oregon MESA
OregonASK
Oregon Computer Science Teachers Association
Oregon FIRIST
Project Lead The Way
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Saturday Academy
Wilsonville Library

School Districts & ESDs

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Canby School District
Central School District
Dallas School District
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Gervais School District
Gladstone School District
Lake Oswego School District
Molalla River School District
Newberg SD
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Oregon City School District
Salem-Keizer School District
Silver Falls School District
Tigard-Tualatin School District
West Linn-Wilsonville School District
Woodburn School District
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Clackamas Community College
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SMS STEM Partnership

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503-821-1169

STEMoregon.org



April 29, 2021

Oregon Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear esteemed legislators,

As director of the South Metro-Salem STEM Partnership (SMSP), it is my pleasure to support the renewed funding for Outdoor School for the 2021-23 biennium. We thank the Oregon Legislature for its investment in Outdoor School over the last two biennia. These funds have allowed the opportunity for many children to experience outdoors for the first time, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability, or socio-economic status. This critical work will continue to support formative outdoor learning experiences for underserved and underrepresented students throughout the state.

The unintended consequence of explicit efforts to improve math and reading outcomes in our schools has been a shift away from project-based, placed-based learning opportunities in STEM, the humanities, and the arts. Outdoor School is an integral, transformative experience for K-12 instruction and Oregon's youth, bringing together many of the elements that have been set aside in recent years for math- and reading-focused instruction.

Oregon's regional STEM Hubs work to engage K-12, higher education, non-profit, and industry partners toward a common purpose to build a better future for all Oregonians. Oregon's economy—and future—relies on supporting our natural resource industries, such as timber, tourism, outdoor recreation, farming and more. Outdoor School is a great way to teach future generations that they don't need to choose between our economy and our environment. Further, Oregon's STEM hubs believe that a student's sense of belonging and feelings for self-efficacy are critical for academic and socioemotional success and well-being; Outdoor School programs are places where students gain confidence, relationship skills, and self-awareness.

The last 15 months have been difficult ones for both educators and students in Oregon. The emotional impact of COVID-19 on students and their struggles with distance learning further emphasize the importance of getting students to outside and physically participating in their own education, rather than being passive recipients of said education. Continued support for Outdoor School is a key strategy in that effort.

The mission of SMSP is to catalyze Oregon students to achieve STEM degrees and certificates, and reach Oregon's education goals by increasing the access, excitement and engagement of students in STEM courses and experiential learning. Support for Outdoor School is in direct alignment with these goals. Continued funding for Outdoor School will help ensure access to such engagement for our highest needs students.

SMSP unreservedly supports Outdoor School, and we look forward to working more closely with their leadership to engage more districts and partners within our region to bring positive formative outdoor experiences to our highest need students.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Melissa Dubois".

Melissa Dubois, Ph.D.
Executive Director